

s, and they've told us exactly that in their own words.

In Australia, according to the Mordialloc-Chelsea News, "Kevin Donnellan, spokesman for Justice Minister Senator Amanda Vanstone, said the success of the scheme [Australia's gun-buyback scheme, implemented after the 1996 Port Arthur shootings] was measured by the number of guns handed in – about 640,000 across Australia – and not whether gun-related deaths have fallen."

It has always been uncomfortable for American gun-owners to know that their names are on government lists. Aside from violating our right to privacy, most gun owners can recall episodes of civilian disarmament and the banning of whole classes of weapons that were accomplished by the means of such lists.

Yet, isn't it also reasonable to prevent certain dangerous people from firearm possession? And if lists of names just happened to be created in the process, isn't that the kind of reasonable regulation society would readily accept for the public good?

In 2007, two researchers, Stéphanie Pézard and Nicolas Florquin, in a special report for the Swiss-based Small Arms Survey, candidly explained how gun-owner licensing facilitates the disarming of civilians: "The policy is to issue licences particularly to individuals who already have an arm, with the idea that this will make it possible, at least, to identify them – which could prove useful in the context of any future operation to disarm the civilian population."

Here in the US, pursuant to the Roberti-Roos Assault Weapon Control Act of 1989, California gun-owners were forced to register certain models of SKS semi-automatic "assault weapons." In 1999, then-Attorney General Bill Lockyer's secret plans to confiscate those legally registered firearms from gun-owners were uncovered by vigilant pro-gun groups. The California Dept. of Justice quickly denied the accusation, stating,

instead, that the documents which were uncovered were just "drafts" and "for discussion only."

One Aussie who remembers her government's massive gun "buy-back" program, said that the buy-back relied on the threat of punitive action against licenced firearms owners with registered firearms." She added, "So, a voluntary surrender was backed up by the threat of 'if you don't we know where you live!'"

The tactics involving the UK's handgun ban, which went into effect in 1998, were similar: lists were used to enforce the ban. One British gun-owner and activist told us that because "every legal handgun was accounted for, the Home Office was able to delegate the round up of the guns to the police."

And Regional Police Commander Basilio Matei, in Arusha, Tanzania, agreed that registration will "make it easier to track down owners of arms when circumstances arise...." Countries such as India and the Philippines have already used their lists to collect lawfully owned firearms from their owners in the weeks prior to elections.

Although the US Supreme Court struck down the Washington, D.C. gun ban, it also stated that there is no right to own "any weapon whatsoever." Aren't certain classes of firearms more dangerous than others? And when we find out just which ones they are, wouldn't the only responsible action be to keep them out of the hands of ordinary citizens?

Dennis Henigan, attorney for the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, stated that "banning a super dangerous class of weapons, like [so-called, non-descript] assault weapons," would not contradict the Court's ruling.

American gun-owners are often characterized as being "paranoid." But in our case, it's not paranoia – they really are still out to get our guns. They just need to take a small detour to get there.

Official records show that no Gardai Officers were murdered in the Republic between 1942 and April 1970. The first for 28 years was Officer Richard Fallon, who was murdered in Dublin during a bank raid in 1970. The story ran for weeks because it was such an unusual event in Ireland. He was shot with an unlicensed handgun.

No Gardai Officers were murdered in 1971.

Thus one Gardai Officer was murdered in the 29 years from 1942 to 1971.

After the Custody Order the murder of Gardai Officers became much more common. In the 29 years from 1972 to 2001, the following 13 Gardai officers (and 1 soldier, in a double murder) were murdered, all with illegally-held pistols: Samuel Donegan (1972), Michael Reynolds (1975), Michael Clerkin (1975), John Morley and Henry Byrne (1980), Seamus Quaid (1980), Patrick Gerard Reynolds (1982), Patrick McLoughlin (1983), Gary Sheehan and Pte. Patrick Kelly (Irish Army) (1983), Frank Hand (1984), Patrick Morrissey (1985), Gerry McCabe (1996) and Andrew Callinan (1999).

Determining the cause(s) for dramatic changes in criminal behaviour patterns is not easy. It may be tempting to assume that the Custody Order was instrumental in the doubling of the overall homicide rate and the dramatic increase in the murders of Gardai Officers, but such a proposition is difficult to prove. What is absolutely certain is that the government and Gardai had a clear obligation to closely monitor the results of such a drastic

policy as the Custody Order. And yet, despite the extremely rapid, negative results following the Custody Order, the government maintained this illegal, failed and unfair policy for 32 years and only abandoned it when forced to do so.

It should be noted that many gun-control advocates believe that all civilian gun ownership should be severely restricted. It is often claimed that the reason why gun control policies fail to result in any identifiable or measurable benefits, is because they are not drastic enough, nor maintained for long enough.

Well, the Irish Custody Order "experiment" of 1972 was extremely drastic and was maintained for 32 years. Nevertheless it failed to generate any identifiable benefits whatsoever to compensate for the damage and gross injustice meted out to the lawful, registered gun-owners of the Republic of Ireland.

NOTE: In 1995 Dr Enda Dooley of the Irish Ministry of Justice published a substantial Paper, "Homicide in Ireland, 1972 – 1992" (ISBN 0-7076-1502-X), in which considerable emphasis is placed on the fact that the average homicide rate over the period was only one per 100,000. No reference was made to the fact that the rate had been very much lower prior to 1972, nor to the fact that the 19 percent of Irish homicides committed with guns was double the rate in neighbouring UK, which had no firearm Custody Order and much higher civilian firearm ownership levels (the UK ban on pistols did not come into effect until 1997).