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Jews with guns - not only in the Israel Defense Forces

By [Natasha Mozgovaya](#)

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WASHINGTON - In the year after the election of Barack Obama as president, more than 14 million weapons were sold in the United States compared with 12.7 million the year before. Gun-shop owners have argued that the rise in sales is linked in part to concerns that the Democratic administration will try to restrict the rights of Americans to hold weapons under license.

The Obama administration has not taken a clear stance on the issue, but in some U.S. states legal battles over the right to bear arms has begun in earnest.

So far Obama has been forced to sign into law the right to carry weapons in national parks, and also the right to bear arms in train compartments. Virginians, meanwhile, were given the right to carry concealed weapons in bars and restaurants, while a 17-year-old law banning the right to buy more than one gun per month was revoked.

In Indiana, companies may no longer prevent their employees from keeping arms in their cars parked on company property. Starbucks became the site of demonstrations by supporters and opponents of gun control after the coffee chain decided to allow customers in states where carrying arms is legal to enter its cafes carrying unconcealed weapons.

Much of the Jewish

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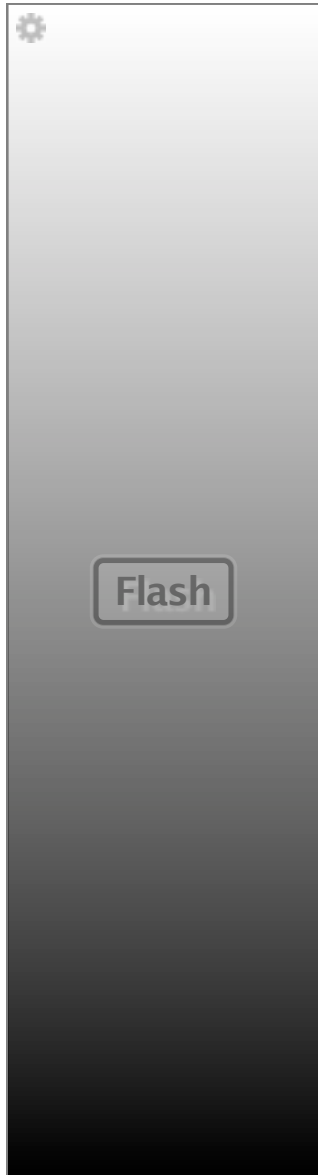
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community has remained outside the debate: Some 90 million U.S. residents hold 200 million firearms, but only a tiny minority of American Jews have guns. However, there appears to be a revival among supporters of the right to bear arms among Jews who say that attitudes are changing because of new threats they face.

One of them is Dovid Bendory, an Orthodox rabbi, 42, from New Jersey. Not only did he buy a gun, he also became an authorized shooting instructor and is giving lessons to members of the Orthodox community. He also distributes material that explains, on the basis of biblical texts, the right of Jews to self-defense.

"I did not grow up with guns, not even with toy guns," he says. "I think that the first time I saw a real gun was when I visited Israel at age 16. But I began to think about weapons seriously after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. As far as I'm concerned, the Twin Towers disaster changed the entire scene, because until then we thought that the terrorist threat existed only outside the United States."

Another turning point was the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in November 2008, where one of the targets was the Chabad House.

"I realized that this is no longer political terrorism but anti-Semitism," he says. "In May 2009 they arrested people in Riverdale, New York who wanted to blow up a synagogue in that neighborhood, which is a 40 minutes drive from my community."

Bendory says the understanding that terrorism can reach America's Jews, too, led to his decision to be ready.

Bendory took part in courses offered by an Israeli instructor, and then decided to disseminate his discoveries among the country's Jewish community with a Web site and his "Ten Commandments for Self-Defense."

"I think that in view of our history, every Jew who is physically and psychologically capable of carrying a gun should do so," he says. "We must be ready to defend ourselves, and God will make sure we will never need to do so. I am not a supporter of Kahane, but I also do not want to find myself on the wrong side of a gun."

About 30,000 people lose their lives in the United States as a result of gunfire every year, but in more than half the cases the shots are self-inflicted.

"I can't see how restrictions on carrying arms would have helped in cases like the shooting at the Holocaust Museum in Washington in June 2009," Bendory says. "As a felon, the shooter was not permitted to carry arms anyway, but he did not care about the law, and the only thing the law did was that none of the people in the Holocaust Museum had a weapon to protect themselves.

"It's strange that so many Jewish Americans are proud of the IDF, but when a Jewish American speaks in favor of guns, they think he is mad. However, when I speak in the synagogue about the need for self-defense, suddenly people come out of the closet and admit that they have guns," Bendory says.

"I put guns in the hands of dozens of people who held one for the first time. In my latest course I taught 12 Orthodox women to fire for the first time in a range," Bendory says. He adds that non-Jews also contact him and encourage him.

William Daroff, director of the Washington office of the Jewish Federations of North America, believes that support for guns in the Jewish community is a marginal phenomenon; he says his organization does not have a set position on the matter.

Aaron Zelman from Wisconsin, who set up the organization Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership 20 years ago recalled with nostalgia his first experience shooting a gun at a Jewish camp in Tucson, Arizona, where he

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2. Pure Paranoia	07:59 Mark of Lewiston	05/03/10
3. Live by the Gun	08:11 Roy	05/03/10
4. More than you Know	08:34 I.M. KnotFooled	05/03/10
5. 80 gun deaths per day in USA..	09:22 had enough	05/03/10
6. The right to bear arms should also be granted in Israel	09:28 josef	05/03/10
7. observation	10:05 potobac	05/03/10
8. #1	14:53 Ariel	05/03/10
9. As a confident heterosexual	15:12 Mark Lincoln	05/03/10
10. Just a price we pay had enough	15:13 Mark Lincoln	05/03/10
11. Their for the black helicopters had enough	15:14 Mark Lincoln	05/03/10
12. Who cares?	15:16 Mark Lincoln	05/03/10
13. When Guns are Outlawed Only Outlaws will have guns	15:22 Realist	05/03/10
14. Roy in Canada	15:25 Eaglebeak	05/03/10
15. To Steve Beikirch	15:26 Realist	05/03/10
16. One Jew buys a gun, this is a headline???	15:42 Jacob Blues	05/03/10
17. In the last 20 years Texas	15:50 Mark Lincoln	05/03/10
18. Guns in theUS	16:05 Michael	05/03/10
19. To Mark and Mark from the USA	16:22 Mark B.	05/03/10
20. Catholic Gun Owner	16:30 Rohr	05/03/10
21. I'm grateful my Dad sent me to Talmud Torah and YMCA summer camp	16:32 Dr. L. Brnd	05/03/10
22. I WANT A HUGE GUN	16:33 _	05/03/10

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