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The Glock Pistol: A Favorite of Mass Shooters

“The types of shooting we do...require students to hit multiple small, moving, reactive targets under human reaction times....Since handgun rounds only poke holes in people, we like to use pistols that allow us to poke holes where we want them, as fast as needed, without changing magazines every seven rounds.”

—Tactical shooting instructor quoted in 2011 Glock catalog describing “America’s default pistol”

“[C]omparable in size and weight to the small .38 revolvers it has replaced, the...Glock 19 is significantly more powerful with greater firepower and is much easier to shoot fast and true.”

—2010 Glock catalog

July 2011

Introduction

The high-capacity Glock pistol owned by Norway mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik stands as a stark example of the gun industry's marketing of increased lethality. Since the mid-1980s, increased firepower and capacity have defined the products of the gun industry—of both U.S. and foreign manufacture.

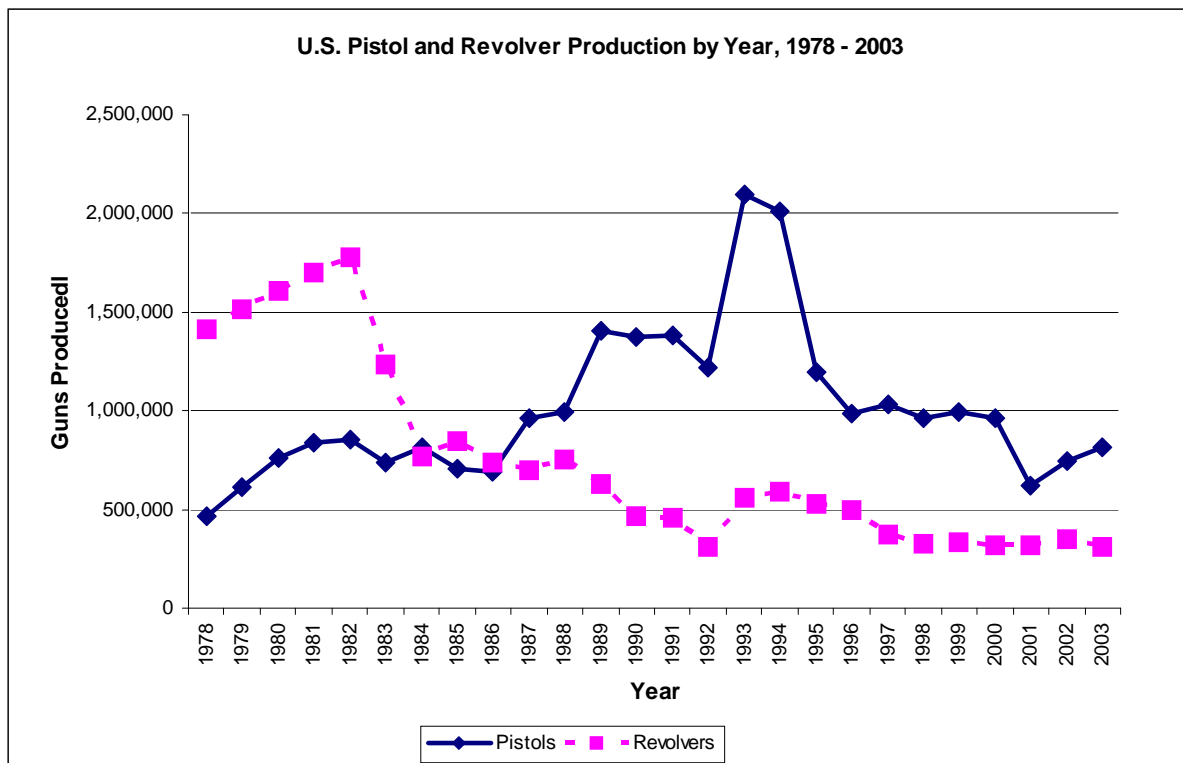
Glock Pistols and Mass Shooters

Glock pistols have been part of the arsenals of the some of the most infamous mass shooters in the United States, including the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting which left 33 dead and 17 wounded and, more recently, the attack in January 2011 in Tucson, AZ, by Jared Loughner which left six dead and 13 wounded—including U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords (D-AZ). Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh was illegally carrying a 45 caliber Glock pistol when he was stopped by law enforcement after the 1995 bombing for driving a car without a license plate. For examples of mass shootings in the United States that involved Glock pistols, please see the chart below.

Examples of Mass Shootings in the United States Involving Glock Pistols		
Mass Shooting Incident	Casualties	Firearm(s)
Safeway parking lot Tucson, Arizona January 8, 2011 Shooter: Jared Loughner	6 dead, 13 wounded	Glock 19 pistol
Virginia Tech Blacksburg, Virginia April 16, 2007 Shooter: Seung-Hui Cho	33 dead (including shooter), 17 wounded	Glock 19 pistol, Walther P22 pistol
Xerox Office Building Honolulu, Hawaii November 2, 1999 Shooter: Byran Uyesugi	7 dead	Glock 17 9mm pistol
Thurston High School Springfield, Oregon May 21, 1998 Shooter: Kip Kinkel	4 dead, 22 wounded	Glock 9mm pistol .22 Sturm Ruger rifle, .22 Sturm Ruger pistol
Connecticut State Lottery Headquarters Newington, Connecticut March 6, 1998 Shooter: Matthew Beck	5 dead (including shooter)	Glock 9mm pistol
Luby's Cafeteria Killeen, Texas October 16, 1991 Shooter: George Hennard	24 dead (including shooter), 20 wounded	Glock 9mm pistol Sturm, Ruger P-89 9mm pistol

Increased Lethality: The Gun Industry's Switch from Six-Shot Revolvers to High-Capacity Pistols

In the 1980s, a very significant shift in gun design and marketing occurred: high-capacity semiautomatic (firing one round per trigger pull) pistols became the dominant product line. Looking at the United States, the most lucrative civilian handgun market in the world, prior to the 1980s the most popular handgun design was the revolver, most often containing six shots. In 1980, semiautomatic pistols accounted for only 32 percent of the 2.3 million handguns produced in America. The majority were revolvers. By 1991 this number had reversed itself with semiautomatic pistols accounting for 74 percent of the 1.8 million handguns produced that year.



The dominance of the semiautomatic pistol greatly increased the firepower in civilian hands. Not only are semiautomatic pistols capable of rapid fire, they utilize high-capacity magazines and can be quickly reloaded. The combination of these features makes semiautomatic pistols efficient killing machines. As 2010 catalog copy for the Glock 19 states, **“comparable in size and weight to the small .38 revolvers it has replaced, the...Glock 19 is significantly more powerful with greater firepower and is much easier to shoot fast and true.”** Described as **“America’s default pistol”** in an article in the company’s 2011 catalog, one tactical shooting instructor quoted states, **“The types of shooting we do...require students to hit multiple small, moving, reactive targets under human reaction times....Since handgun rounds only poke holes in people, we like to use pistols that allow us to poke holes where we want them, as fast as needed, without changing magazines every seven rounds.”**

U.S. Pistol and Revolver Production, 1978 to 2008

Year	Pistols	Revolvers
1978	463,426	1,413,651
1979	609,635	1,514,645
1980	764,451	1,605,192
1981	835,167	1,702,062
1982	853,444	1,775,179
1983	733,814	1,233,022
1984	814,234	766,317
1985	706,542	843,529
1986	692,977	734,650
1987	963,562	695,270
1988	991,011	754,711
1989	1,402,660	628,765
1990	1,376,399	462,496
1991	1,381,325	456,941
1992	1,216,174	309,044
1993	2,093,186	562,292
1994	2,014,336	586,450
1995	1,195,266	527,664
1996	985,533	498,944
1997	1,036,077	370,428
1998	960,365	324,390
1999	995,446	335,784
2000	962,901	318,960
2001	623,070	320,143
2002	741,514	347,070
2003	811,660	309,364
2004	728,511	294,099
2005	815,475	275,323
2006	1,021,260	382,069
2007	1,216,479	391,334
2008	1,387,129	431,753
Total	31,393,029	21,171,541

Glock History

According to *Making a Killing: The Business of Guns in America* (The New Press, 1999, New York) by Violence Policy Center Senior Policy Analyst Tom Diaz:

Gaston Glock never made a gun before the mid-1980s. He began his career as an engineer, and in 1963 formed the company of Glock Ges.m.b.H in his hometown of Deutch-Wagram, near Vienna. The company started out making doorknobs and hinges, then moved into military and police hardware (grenades, entrenching tools, etc.), combining high quality synthetic materials and special steels. In 1980, the Austrian Army announced a competition for a new standard sidearm. Gaston Glock assembled a panel of experts and produced a prototype Glock Model 17 9mm pistol, a distinctive combination of “polymers” (also known to most of us as “plastic”) and steel. That pistol won the Austrian Army competition in 1982, and Glock was airborne on the wings of the ensuing contract.

Gaston Glock soon turned his eyes to the United States, opened Glock, Inc., “the company’s United States beachhead” in the Atlanta, Georgia, suburb of Smyrna, and went after the American law enforcement market.

Glock’s pursuit of U.S. law enforcement agencies was central to its deliberate strategy first to gain the prestige of such sales, and then to use them in its marketing campaign to sell to civilians. “It was a conscious decision to go after the law enforcement market first,” Gaston Glock said. “In marketing terms, we assumed that, by pursuing the law enforcement market, we would then receive the benefit of ‘after sales’ in the commercial market.”

The strategy worked so well that by 1995 the company was downplaying advertising and was chronically back-ordered. According to the company, in that year there were half a million Glock pistols in use throughout North America (meaning mostly in the United States). Twenty thousand of these were issued by law enforcement agencies—eighty percent of Glock, Inc.’s production was going to civilians and twenty percent to law enforcement.

More recently, in its 2011 catalog (which contains such articles as “Glock Around the Clock”), the company boasts that in 2009 “the National Rifle Association’s magazine *American Rifleman* would name the GLOCK 17 as the third most significant handgun of all time. That takes in the entire 485-year history of firearms!”

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