



July 1, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Office of the Speaker  
235 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Senate Majority Leader  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Re: 400 Mayors Call on Congress to Support H.R.2159/S.1317 and Close the “Terror Gap”**

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Reid:

Just this month, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report indicating that individuals on the terrorist watch list succeeded in purchasing guns and explosives from licensed dealers 865 times between 2004 and 2009. Despite these documented cases, the FBI still does not have the authority to block firearm sales to terror suspects – the same individuals who are considered too dangerous to board a plane.

As members of Mayors Against Illegal Guns, a bi-partisan coalition of more than 400 mayors in 44 states representing more than 56 million Americans, we urge Congress to close this “terror gap” by passing H.R.2159/S.1317. This critically important legislation, introduced by Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and Representative Peter King (R-NY), would close the terror gap by giving the Department of Justice discretion to block sales to terror suspects on a case-by-case basis.

Federal law currently prohibits nine categories of dangerous persons from purchasing or possessing firearms, including convicted felons and persons with serious mental health problems. Remarkably, persons on the terrorist watch list are not currently prohibited, making the government powerless to stop gun sales to suspected terrorists.

This gap in gun background checks requires immediate attention. Terror suspects have already gunned down Americans in attacks within our own borders. Such attacks and planned attacks include:

- **Attack on an Army-Navy Recruiting Station in Little Rock, Arkansas:** On June 1, 2009, Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad opened fire at an Army-Navy recruiting station in Little Rock, Arkansas killing one private and wounding another. Police found an SKS semiautomatic rifle, a .22-caliber rifle, and a .380-

calber semiautomatic handgun in Muhammad's truck. At the time of the shooting, Muhammad was under investigation by the Joint Terrorism Task Force after having been arrested in Yemen with a fake Somali passport. Muhammad was charged with murder and 16 counts of terrorist acts on June 2, 2009.

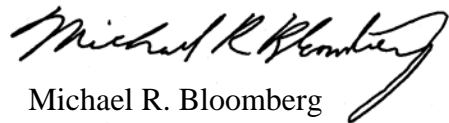
- **Murder of a Yeshiva Student on the Brooklyn Bridge:** On March 1, 1994, Rashid Baz shot and killed 16-year old Ari Halberstam on an on-ramp to the Brooklyn Bridge. Baz was armed with a machine gun, a 9 mm pistol, and a "street sweeper" shotgun. The FBI later concluded the killing was a terrorist act motivated by anti-Semitism.
- **Murder at Empire State Building:** On February 23, 1997, Ali Abu Kamal opened fire on the observation deck of the Empire State Building with a handgun purchased in Florida, killing one tourist and wounding six others before killing himself. A note found in his pocket expressed hatred for the United States, Great Britain, Israel, and France.
- **Plot to Attack Fort Dix:** In 2007, six terror suspects were arrested for plotting an attack on Fort Dix after trying to buy M-16s, AK-47s, and handguns from a government informant. One of the six terror suspects pleaded guilty in October 2007 to providing firearms to illegal aliens. In December 2008, the other five suspects were convicted of conspiracy to kill U.S. military personnel.
- **Murder of CIA Employees outside CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia:** On January 25, 1993, Mir Aimal Kasi walked between two lanes of traffic at a red light near CIA Headquarters and opened fire with an assault rifle. He shot at point-blank range into five cars. Two CIA employees were killed and three others were wounded. Kasi then fled to Pakistan, where he remained at large until his arrest in 1997. He had been on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted List as a result of this shooting.

Congress needs to take immediate action to prevent more terror suspects from purchasing guns. We urge every member of Congress to keep guns out of the hands of terrorists by closing the terror gap and voting for H.R.2159/S.1317.

Sincerely,



Thomas M. Menino  
Mayor of Boston  
Coalition Co-Chair



Michael R. Bloomberg  
Mayor of New York City  
Coalition Co-Chair

Cc: All other members of Congress

## Members of Mayors Against Illegal Guns:

Mayor Larry P. Langford, Birmingham, Alabama  
Mayor Thomas Henderson, Center Point, Alabama  
Mayor Carroll L. Watson, Lincoln, Alabama  
Mayor Samuel L. Jones, Mobile, Alabama  
Mayor Ron Davis, Prichard, Alabama  
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Mayor Carolyn Floyd, Kodiak, Alaska  
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Mayor Mark Funkhouser, Kansas City, Missouri

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Mayor David Shumaker, Bristol, Tennessee  
Mayor Tom Beehan, Oak Ridge, Tennessee  
Mayor A C Wharton, Shelby County, Tennessee  
Mayor Will Wynn, Austin, Texas  
Mayor Bill White, Houston, Texas  
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Mayor Paul D. Fraim, Norfolk, Virginia  
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Mayor Andrew Halverson, Stevens Point, Wisconsin  
Mayor David Ross, Superior, Wisconsin  
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Mayor Larry Nelson, Waukesha, Wisconsin