

# A Check on Government?

When discussing the Second Amendment, gun control advocates blithely assume that any uprising against the government would be quickly quelled by the overwhelming superiority of the U.S. Military. That assumption is unfounded and indeed is overwhelmingly refuted by the actual facts.

There are over 420 million guns in the hands of U.S. citizens and approximately 8.1 *billion* rounds of ammunition were purchased in 2018 alone. Of those 420 million firearms, between 18 and 25 million are AR-15 variants or variations of the AK-47 – and 40% of ALL rifles sold now are of that type. Add to that an enormous number of high-powered, long range hunting weapons with high end scopes owned by competent marksmen and having sniping capabilities close to those of the extremely small number of trained military snipers. 7.6 million firearms were produced or imported in 2018 and 2.85 million of those were rifles, nearly half of which were variants of the AR-15 or AK-47.

Conservatively estimating an average of four (4) firearms per gun-owning household, there are over 100 million homes with firearms. If only 5% of those households rose up in insurrection, they would comprise a force of at least 5 million strong. Only one percent still would result in a force of over 1 million. Both numbers would be multiplied by a factor of 2 or more where more than one member of a family participated – which would likely be the case with fathers, sons and even daughters participating. For reference purposes, NRA membership in 2018 was 5.5 million.

What would the U.S. Military bring to bear in any such conflict?

The **entire** U.S. active military consists of roughly 1.3 million personnel with another 860,000 reserve enlistees. For all practical purposes, the Navy (325,000 personnel) would play no role in any such conflict except as an unneeded launch platform and

source of aircraft. The same is true for the relatively nominal personnel of the Coast Guard which is busy with other tasks like drug interdiction, etc. anyway. The Air Force (322,000 personnel) role also would be extremely limited given the insurgent nature of the conflict and the risk of collateral damage to U.S. civilians. That leaves the Army with 471,000 personnel and the Marine Corps with another 185,500 personnel.

Keep in mind that substantially less than 40% of those Army personnel are combat personnel or shooters (the true number probably is closer to 25-30 percent). The remaining 60% perform administrative and support roles. That means only 188,400 personnel would be available for combat. Of that number, roughly a third (64,000) already are deployed in various trouble spots around the world, *leaving only 124,400 shooters available domestically.*

While every Marine is technically a proficient rifleman, the vast majority are, like the Army, tasked with administrative and support roles. The Marines (186,000 personnel) could at best provide *less than 50,000* personnel to assist in combating any domestic insurrection. That gives a *total of only 174,000 personnel available to actually combat over five million insurgents - odds of 29 to one.* If only one (1%) of households rose up, the military force of 124,400 still would face an insurgent force of at least one million and odds of nearly 6 to one.

The insurgent nature of the conflict also would render much of the technological superiority of the military useless. As in post-war Afghanistan and Iraq, tanks, artillery and other heavy weaponry would be largely unusable among a civilian population. The same is true of most aviation assets. The personnel of these assets also would be hopelessly inept (and sitting ducks) if redeployed as riflemen, lacking any real knowledge of fire and maneuver tactics. A substantial number of those assets also likely would be lost in raids or skirmishes with insurgents who might have less hesitancy to then use them. For reference purposes, consider the difficulties experienced in Afghanistan and Iraq where the U.S. Military might has faced insurgent forces that *never exceeded 50,000* combatants.

The numbers above also assume full participation and compliance by all military personnel. That is an extremely dubious presumption. Many personnel, including some whole divisions (each comprising 10-15,000 soldiers), likely would side with the insurgents, especially Reserve and National Guard units. Those that do not may be reluctant to fire on other U.S. citizens and will be hobbled by the need to minimize collateral damage. As the conflict continued and civilian casualties mounted, even more defections could be expected. And history proves that the more harsh the military response, the greater the ranks of the insurgency would swell.

The simple reality is that a revolt by even a small percentage of firearm owners would almost certainly succeed – though perhaps at horrific cost if the government failed to quickly reverse course.

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**Author Note:** Like many young men growing up in the rural South, the author owned a .22 caliber rifle and a shotgun, both of which were used for hunting and sport shooting. He no longer hunts and has passed the .22 rifle on to his son, but he still owns firearms for recreation and personal defense. He is not a member of the NRA and has no vested interest in the gun debate, but is tired of hearing heated arguments presented on both sides of the issue without bothering to learn the facts.