

U.S. gun sales in January set new record amid fears of violence

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Americans wait in a line to enter a gun store in Culver City, California. (Photo: AP)

Washington, February 4 (RHC)-- New data shows firearm sales in the United States have set a new record for January amid fears of violence and political tensions in the country. Gun merchants sold more than 2 million firearms in January. That's an 80 percent year-over-year spike as an estimated 1.2 million firearms were sold in the U.S. in January 2020, according to the National Shooting Sports Federation.

The January Capitol attack and the inauguration of Democratic President Joe Biden who campaigned on gun control measures helped the firearms industry set a gun sales record last month, according to the data. The FBI said it conducted a record 4.3 million background checks in January, with the bureau saying, if the pace continues, it will complete more than 50 million gun-related background checks by the end of the year, breaking the current record set in 2020.

Firearm purchases climbed to an unprecedented 2.1 million in March, early in the coronavirus pandemic when stay-at-home orders, which were issued to contain the spread of the deadly disease, led to widespread uncertainty.

"With the lockdown and a president who is saying things like 'gun reform,' there's a fear within the gun community and people that are responsible gun owners that they're going to be made into felons just by nature of law," a 27-year-old Florida resident told the Washington Post.

On January 6th, Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol to stop the counting of electoral-college votes certifying Biden's victory. The attack resulted in the deaths of five people, including an on-duty police officer, and injuries to about 140 police officers.

"People saw all of this happening at the same time, and they became very concerned for their safety," said Mark Oliva, public-affairs director for the National Shooting Sports Foundation. The COVID anxiety and the police killing of African American, George Floyd, which set off a summer of racial-justice protests, also caused an unprecedented surge in first-time gun owners in 2020.

Firearms sales went even higher, to 2.8 million in June and 2.5 million in July. Walmart removed gun and ammunition displays from thousands of its U.S. stores. Among the U.S. states, Michigan and New Jersey recorded the biggest percentage change in firearm purchases in January compared with the previous year.

It's common for gun sales to jump when a Democrat takes over the White House. The election and re-election of Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012 were both followed by gun sale surges. "Obama was the best gun salesman in the country," a gun store said. "COVID was the next best. And now I think Joe Biden is going to be the ultimate gun salesman."

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