# A Thanksgiving Story -- A Texas Concealed Gun Carrier Gives Thanks

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**The Thanksgiving holiday will leave one man, Jose Alonzo Salame of San Antonio Texas, a contented man, assured of his rights to** carry a concealed handgun in public, and to wave it around. Here's a summary of his apparent rights under Texas' concealed gun law.

Mr. Salame may

- carry a weapon to a Black Friday sale at his local Sears;
- according to witnesses, provoke a physical altercation with a man trying to cut into line ahead of him and others;
- display a 9 mm semi-automatic handgun after being punched by the man he had incited;
- cause panic among other shoppers in line;
- avoid any legal consequences for this, and, in fact, be treated as a man well within his Texas rights by police who were called to the scene of what they were told was a shooting; and
- be merely asked to leave the store *with a voucher* so that he could return later to take advantage of the reduced Black Friday prices.

**According to the San Antonio Express-News "officers were dispatched to the mall's Sears store about 9 p.m.** Thursday in response to a call about a shooting, according to an incident report. . . 'We don't see this very often,' Officer Matthew Porter said, adding that Salame did not break the law by displaying the weapon. 'He was within his rights.' . . . Police confiscated the gun, which was loaded and had one round in a chamber, the report says.[1. *Shopper who pulled gun at San Antonio mall within rights, cops say*, Ana Le, *San Antonio Express-News*, Nov. 23, 2012.]

Well, Happy Thanksgiving to you, Mr. Salame. Here's a few things wrong with this, and, in general, with all these concealed or open carry laws:

- Studies have shown that these laws lead to weapons being displayed ***in order to intimidate*** far more than for protection or for self-defense. The leading study found:
    - Most [state court trial] judges rated the reported self-defense gun uses as probably illegal in most cases, even assuming that the respondent had a permit to own and carry the gun and that the respondent had described the event honestly. Guns are used to threaten and intimidate more often than they are used in self-defense. Most self-reported self-defense gun uses may be illegal and against the interests of society;[2. Are guns used more by US civilians for self-defense or for intimidation?, Hemenway D, Azrael D, Miller M., *NIH Journal Digest*, June 2001.];
- persons carrying concealed or holstered guns are often unable to control their weapons during an altercation despite training to do so,
- police force officials throughout these states complain that, as in this incident, their forces are often sent out on these missions when their time and effort would be better spent elsewhere;

**In *Beyond This Horizon*,**[3. Publishers Weekly review: http://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-671-31836-9] **Robert Heinlein wrote:**

> "An armed society is a polite society. Manners are good when one may have to back up his acts with his life."

There's a fallacy hidden in his assertion that, frankly, destroys its premise. The incident at the Sears described above is a good example. Mr. Salome, according to witnesses, had been inciting an altercation with the individual. Certainly, cutting in line is immensely irritating, unfair etc. etc. and words are often exchanged in these situations. I've seen this frequently. Usually, the person who cuts in creeps off to the end of the line.

Here's the important fact in the Sears case: Mr. Salome, because he was carrying a concealed weapon, felt assured that he could push the situation farther than he might without his weapon. Thus, he intimidated beyond what was called for in the situation, apparently ginning it up to the point where a punch was thrown. Salome then responded by drawing his handgun, with the expected result in a packed line.

Is this what Mr. Heinlein meant by "An armed society is a polite society."? No. He did not take into account that possessing a weapon can cause some people like Mr. Salome to act badly *precisely because they are carrying a gun.* They can intimidate others in situations that do not call for force. They can be belligerent in situations where belligerence, without a gun, would be avoided. Arguments become reasons to display a weapon.

To me, an armed society is a more *belligerent* society, where "politeness" is enforced at the point of a gun.

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