



NRA Lawsuit: New Orleans Gun Owners' Rights Violated During Katrina Firearm Seizures

Read more: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,318478,00.html#ixzz1ihnwsR1x>

The National Rifle Association has hired private investigators to find hundreds of people whose firearms were seized by city police in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, according to court papers filed this week.

The NRA is trying to locate gun owners for a federal lawsuit that the lobbying group filed against Mayor Ray Nagin and Police Superintendent Warren Riley over the city's seizure of firearms after the Aug. 29, 2005, hurricane.

In the lawsuit, the NRA and the Second Amendment Foundation claim the city violated gun owners' constitutional right to bear arms and left them "at the mercy of roving gangs, home invaders, and other criminals" after Katrina.

The NRA says the city seized more than 1,000 guns that weren't part of any criminal investigation after the hurricane. Police have said they took only guns that had been stolen or found in abandoned homes.

NRA lawyer Daniel Holliday said investigators have identified about 300 of the gun owners and located about 75 of them. Some of them could be called to testify during a trial, he added.

"Finding these folks has been a nightmare," Holliday said. "That is really the guts of our case — to establish that there was indeed a pattern of the police going out and taking people's guns without any legal reason to do so."

In April 2006, police made about 700 firearms available for owners to claim if they could present a bill of sale or an affidavit with the weapon's serial number.

An attorney for the city and a police department spokesman didn't return a reporter's telephone calls Wednesday.

Alan Gottlieb, founder of the Bellevue, Wash.-based Second Amendment Foundation, said the police department has returned only about 100 of the 1,000 seized guns.

"Obviously, we don't expect the city to find everybody. We only wanted to see a good-faith effort, and that's what the city didn't do," Gottlieb added. "It's a bad example to let them get away with it."

In court papers filed Monday, NRA attorneys say finding the gun owners has been difficult because the storm has scattered so many residents.

New Orleans had an estimated 455,000 residents before Katrina, but less than two-thirds of that number live there now.

The NRA is asking for a delay in the trial, set to begin Feb. 19, saying they need more time to find gun owners. U.S. District Judge Carl Barbier had not yet ruled on the request Wednesday.

Read more: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,318478,00.html#ixzz1ihnqfShu>