“Good guy with a gun” Dilemma and the Second Amendment

The proponents of gun ownership claim that local citizens may become the protection for civilians and prevent the crime of shooting. Nonetheless, the harsh reality and tragic deaths of the armed citizens who came for help indicate the acute need to reconsider the mechanism of citizen and law enforcement cooperation in case of a public threat or shooting.

One such tragic case happened recently in Alabama, where Emantic Bradford Jr., a young man with a license to bear a firearm, was shot by mistake during the accident in the shopping mall. There was an altercation, and the gunfire broke that struck two innocents. Mr. Bradford allegedly involved in the dispute but with intent to help people and stop the gunman. However, police officers that arrived on the scene misidentified Mr. Bradford with the gunmen and shot him on the spot as he “brandished” gun in hand (Zaveri). Yet, a critical detail is that “it was not clear whether the officers believed Mr. Bradford fired or intended to fire before he was killed” (Zaveri). At the same time, Mr. Bradford bore weapon legally since Alabama does not prohibit people from carrying firearms in public and state legislature reads that “the mere carrying of a visible pistol, holstered or secured, in a public place, in and of itself,” does not constitute the crime of disorderly conduct (Smith). Hence, the officer apparently failed his obligation to issue any verbal warnings or commands.

However, the police do not seem to take full responsibility yet. Even though the police report of the incident suggests that the display of gun “instantly heightened the sense of threat to approaching police officers responding to the chaotic scene,” the due procedure requires officers to make sure that suspect poses a threat before any decisive actions, while “police have not elaborated or explained why he was viewed as a threat” (Haag). Thus, Mr. Bradford’s tragic death at the hands of law enforcement has renewed questions about the reality of the “good guy with a gun” argument advocated by the National Rifle Association and Second Amendment proponents.
This approach suggests that “the only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is with a good guy with a gun” (Lopez). Proponents of gun control are critical of that approach and claim that crimes will deteriorate if citizens will not have access to the gun (Lopez). Nonetheless, the problem here is that the ‘bad guy’ will get the gun if he wants it. The reason is that the US is the largest market of the weapon in the world, and the fourth part of this weapon is sold illegally while the government cannot trace it (Cook). In that way, gun laws are vital for self-defense and protection in conditions of unequal access to a weapon so the Second Amendment should not be repealed as it represents one of the fundamental rights and guaranty of personal safety.

Still, it is necessary that in case of similar accidents, the braveness and dedication of civilians did not result in tragedy. For instance, law enforcement may issue particular protocols of conduct in case of public threat and oblige those with the right of gun ownership to learn them to obtain the license. Similar documents will clearly indicate when the civilian should involve in an ongoing shooting incident and when it is better to leave the responsibility to police. In the following case, it seems that Mr. Bradford was not involved in the case and willingly went to the scene with the gun, so such example of conduct may be prohibited to prevent possible misidentification. However, the police should hold its duties responsibly as well, and avoid shooting of armed people without clear knowledge of their threat.

All in all, the analysis suggests that the Second Amendment should be preserved as it secures the right of people for self-protection, but the government and law enforcement should come up with a solution on civilian and police cooperation in case of shooting incidents.
Works Cited


