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The Story of Michael Giles

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[May 23, 2015](#)



Michael Giles found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time. An Air Force veteran, with tours in Iraq and Kuwait, he is in prison for 25 years, for using a gun in defense of his life. Even the presiding Judge thinks the mandatory sentence is too harsh, given the facts of the case, and Michael's previously clean record.

The paranoia in modern society concerning guns, and self-defense, has destroyed this young man's life. It is time to put an end to the paranoia and the self-righteous attitudes of anti-gun, worshipers of government power. Lives are being destroyed by ridiculous laws and regulations, all for the purpose of making everyone dependent on Big Brother, instead of strong, self-sufficient members of the community.

I urge you to contact the Tallahassee authorities, as well as the Governor of Florida to right this travesty of justice.

Shorty Dawkins, Associate Editor

[This story comes from famm.org](#)

On Feb. 6, 2010, active duty air force serviceman Michael Giles was invited to a Tallahassee nightclub by

a few of his friends. Giles, a young father, was stationed in Tampa at the time, after spending the previous six years on tours of duty in places such as Iraq and Kuwait.

Michael accepted the invitation to hang out, thinking it would be a good time. Unfortunately, the night took a violent turn.

Two area fraternity chapters began arguing and fighting inside of the club, and the chaos soon turned into a brawl involving dozens of people that spilled into the club's parking lot. Michael thought that, during the commotion, his friends may have all gathered at the rental car one of his buddies had used to drive everyone to the party that night. When he made it to the vehicle, but didn't find his friends there, Michael retrieved his legally owned handgun from the glove box, and resumed his search for his friends. "I removed the handgun because the car was unlocked and [people] were walking between the cars," Michael says. Despite the fact that he was not involved in the fight, while Michael was looking for his friends, he was attacked from behind and punched to the ground.

Fearing for his life, he fired two shots from his firearm in an attempt to defend himself. His attacker was struck in the leg, but not seriously injured.

The gunshots broke up the fight, and Michael says he went across the street from the club to get away from the people that harmed him. He was arrested shortly after the incident and charged in Florida state court. There was little dispute over the facts of the case—the prosecutor and defense attorneys agreed that Michael had been attacked. Even the testimony of Michael's attacker supported that fact. However, prosecutors argued that he did not need to fire a gun to defend himself, and charged him with attempted murder.

"If I wouldn't have had my firearm that night, I believe I would have been killed or [would be] permanently handicapped right now," Michael says. "I was never one for trouble, which is the reason why I never had a criminal record before this offense."

Ultimately, Michael was acquitted of the attempted murder charges, but a jury convicted him of aggravated battery—because a gun was involved, the offense carries a mandatory minimum sentence under Florida's 10-20-Life law. Michael was sentenced to the 25-year minimum required by the law, despite his judge's strong objections. During trial, and again at sentencing, Michael's judge expressed concern over the sentence: "Frankly, I think the 25-year mandatory is overly harsh on the facts of this case, but that's what the law requires I do....I have no legal authority to impose less than that."

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