

# PHUKET GAZETTE

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## Phuket Police Deputy Commander: Gun Control Still Within our Grasp

PHUKET: Phuket Provincial Police Deputy Commander Arun Kaewvatee, 52, is originally from Ron Phibun District in Nakhon Sri Thammarat, a province well known throughout Thailand for gun use. Col Arun has been Deputy Commander of Phuket Provincial Police for a year. Here, he talks about illegal guns and gun ownership in Phuket.

I do not consider illegal guns to be a problem in Phuket because if they were, gun attacks would occur often, but they rarely happen here. Most criminal attacks do not involve guns. The recent case of the Australian tourists who shot the German tourists in Patong (story [here](#)) is very unusual.

We have many checkpoints throughout Phuket, and they don't often turn up guns, so if you ask me about the problem of using guns in public or carrying them with the intent of killing people, I would say we seldom have that problem here.

In Thailand, we have a gun control law that allows people who have a good reason to own a gun. For example, someone with a jewelry shop may feel they need a gun to protect themselves and their property. Since we cannot provide them with 24-hour police security, I think it is reasonable for them to have guns.

Guns are not widely sold in Phuket. We have only a few gun shops here. It's not like Wang Burapha in Bangkok, which is well known for having many gun shops.

Generally, possessing a gun is not a problem as long as you have a permit and do not carry it openly. So if you own a gun and leave it at home, it will not be a problem. In my opinion the gun control law clearly identifies who is allowed to possess a gun. The law itself is good.

But there are a couple of points where problems can arise. The first is with the people who have the authority to issue the gun permits: the District Chiefs. They have to be very careful to follow the rules strictly and use good judgment in deciding who should own a gun. For example, someone who used to be involved in drugs or crime or has a mental illness should not be allowed to have a gun.

The second problem is with people who get hold of guns illegally. They might buy a used gun from someone who is selling it illegally, or be given it, or even make a homemade gun.

To prevent illegal gun possession, we have set up checkpoints and asked district officers to be stricter in applying the criteria for gun ownership.

As I mentioned before, the problem of illegal gun ownership and attacks on people with guns are rare here, that's why we do not have any special measures to deal with them.

However, after the shooting in Patong, we realized we needed to be more strict about tourists carrying guns in Phuket.

The first step is to be better informed. We're asking every police station to survey their area and give us information about the tourists there: what countries they are from, what areas they stay in, whether there is any history of conflicts or problems with specific groups.

If we find any suspicious issues that might lead to conflict or to the possession of drugs or weapons, we will investigate further.

â€“ **Phuket Gazette**

*Phuket, Thailand*

*12:24 local time (GMT +7)*

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