When you deplane at an airport in Florida, you are likely to be accosted by some individual handing out cautionary literature. No, it’s not a religious tract, but a pamphlet from the Brady Campaign for Public Disinformation, warning you that you are in imminent risk of serious injury or death, now that you have entered the perilous precincts of the Sunshine State. In fact, the Brady Campaign has even spread this message in travel publications in the U.S. and the United Kingdom, and on the Internet.

According to the Brady Bunch, what now makes Florida America’s Most Dangerous State is a new law, referred to as the “Stand Your Ground” rule. According to this law, citizens now have more legal backup when they have to use deadly force outside their homes. Prior to this ruling, if you were attacked, your first obligation was to retreat.

To us troglodyte gun owners, the idea of self-defense is a natural and logical thing, in addition to being a God-given right. But there are those who would disagree. The Brady people refer to the new regulation as the “Shoot first and ask questions later” law, and they conjure up images of Dodge City – always a favorite metaphor of the anti-gunners. “Blood will run in the streets!” they like to exclaim. That’s what the anti-self-defense crowd said back in 1987, when Florida passed its concealed carry law. In the years since, Florida’s violent crime rate has declined, and now stands at approximately half that of Washington, D.C., the showcase city of gun control.

At the airport, the Brady people will caution tourists against engaging in any disputes with the natives, since the latter are likely to be armed and therefore violent, crazy, irresponsible and now – thanks to this new law – immune from prosecution. Be afraid…be very afraid.

Viewed from a sane perspective, however, the new “Stand your Ground” rule is an important victory for law-abiding Floridians. But a larger problem remains for tourists arriving at Florida’s airports and airports nationwide. Thanks to our legislators, as arriving visitors to any city in our great nation, we all have one thing in common: we are disarmed. Think about it…unless someone meeting you outside of the airport’s Security Zone is providing you with a loaded gun, or you have a gun and ammo in your checked luggage, you are defenseless at your destination.

That bit of intelligence was not unknown to a number of unpleasant individuals in Florida some years ago. These goblins were preying on tourists – easily identifiable by the rental company logos on their cars – leaving the airport. Since then, I understand that many rental car companies in Florida have stopped installing “Unarmed Victim” license plate frames on their vehicles. Smart move. But the fact remains, if you travel by air to another state or country, and have only carry-on luggage, you are a sitting duck. As Karl Malden used to say, in the old American Express commercials, “What will you do; what will you do?”

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