

3.2 Crime and punishment in the USA

1

GUN CRIME

- second Amendment: the right to bear arms → easy availability of weapons → high level of gun crime
- mass shootings, including at schools, are common
- the anti-gun control lobby, led by the NRA, is so powerful that it is almost impossible to introduce any form of gun control measures

3

DEATH PENALTY

- majority of states still have the death penalty but very few use it
- lethal injection: most common method
- supporters: justice must be done for murder victims; death penalty is a deterrent; comfort for the victims' families
- opponents: all human life is of value; executing a killer does not bring the victim back; not a deterrent since many homicides are committed in rage or under the influence of drugs; Blacks and minorities are far more likely to be sentenced to death than whites

2

WAR ON DRUGS

- very strict alcohol and drug regulations and penalties
→ ineffective in cutting drug and alcohol use
- high legal drinking age does not prevent teenage alcohol use
- severe clamp-downs especially on marijuana possession and use
→ overburdening of prison system with people guilty of minor drug offenses

4

WAR ON TERRORISM

- surge in patriotism following the 9/11 attacks
= support for "war on terrorism"
- founding of Homeland Security and US Patriot Act
→ detection and prevention of terrorist acts
- US military action in Afghanistan and Iraq
→ eventual capture and execution of Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein
- criticism: reduction of civil liberties through Patriot Act; unjustified war in Iraq when no weapons of mass destruction were found
- controversy of Guantanamo Bay prison: alleged terrorists held without trial, possibly subjected to torture

IMPORTANT VOCABULARY

aftermath	Nachwirkungen	deterrent	Abschreckungsmittel	narcotics	Rauschgift
appeal	Berufung	firearm	Schusswaffe	parole	vorzeitige Entlassung
capital punishment	Todesstrafe	firing squad	Exekutionskommando	torture	Folter