



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on January 16, 2013

## Militarization of America and Newtown Massacre: Cause and Effect

The horror of the Sandy Hook Elementary School murders sent parents to their knees and legislators to their computers. While parents and all concerned and mourning Americans sought understanding and comfort, designing lawmakers sought to take advantage of a tragedy for political ends. As usual.



President Obama spoke of the need to change our culture and restrict access to weapons. [The president said](#):

Can we honestly say that we're doing enough to keep our children — all of them — safe from harm? Can we claim, as a nation, that we're all together there, letting them know that they are loved, and teaching them to love in return? Can we say that we're truly doing enough to give all the children of this country the chance they deserve to live out their lives in happiness and with purpose?

I've been reflecting on this the last few days, and if we're honest with ourselves, the answer is no. We're not doing enough. And we will have to change.

In that vein, many commentators and gun control advocates pointed to the ease with which guns can be purchased in America. Many of them called for a more robust screening process, one that included mental health evaluations.

For example, in New Jersey, Assemblyman Joe Cryan proposed legislation to "ensure the mental stability of anyone authorized to purchase a firearm in New Jersey."

"Newtown was a true eye opener for us," said Cryan, as [quoted by Politicker NJ](#). "Based on what we know about the alleged shooter at this point, mental health may have played a key factor in this tragedy. And this appears to be a common thread in many of the mass shootings we've seen in recent years. There's been a significant outpouring of support from the public to make mental health screenings a part of the overall discussion on gun control. I think any legitimate effort to curb gun violence must include this important aspect."

Specifically, Cryan's bill (A-3667) would require anyone in New Jersey who applies for a license to purchase a firearm to pass a mental health screening "administered by a medical doctor or licensed psychiatrist in New Jersey."

Some voices in the chorus calling for confiscation of weapons pointed to violent video games as the likely source of the murderous rage that drove Adam Lanza to brutally kill 20 children and six staff members.

Fox News' Gretchen Carlson, for example, [indicted video games in an interview](#) with conservative radio host Laura Ingraham.

"There's been a lot of talk about the fact that kids are actually experiencing what it feels like to murder somebody when they play these games," Carlson said. "I have to tell you that I made a decision after



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this happened Friday to not buy a specific kind of video equipment for my child that eventually he could get those games for.”

David Axelrod, a senior advisor to President Obama, expressed similar sentiments in a [tweet that read](#), “In NFL post-game: an ad for shoot ‘em up video game. All for curbing weapons of war. But shouldn’t we also quit marketing murder as a game?”

Despite the relative value of the opinions of a Fox News talking head and an Obama administration official, the empirical data do not support their premise.

A study of the “world’s 10 largest video game markets” [reported by the Washington Post](#) discovered no statistical link between video game play and gun-related violence.

Furthermore, in many places around the world where video games are more popular than in the United States, the study reported a “much lower firearm-related murder rates.” Notably, the study also found that many countries with the highest rate of video game consumption also “tend to be some of the safest countries in the world.”

Admittedly, that does not prove that playing violent video games makes a person more peaceful. Quite the contrary, undoubtedly. However, it does suggest that when searching for a reason for the soul-scarring massacre at Sandy Hook, one should look beyond violent video games.

Perhaps, in fact, it is not pretend violence that is causing this crescendo of violence in our culture. Maybe it has something to do with very real killing being perpetrated by our government.

Every day — literally every day — an American serviceman sitting in front of a screen somewhere guides a drone toward a target and fires a missile that kills an “alleged” militant, as well as several innocent bystanders, including children. None of these targets is ever named, and the bodies often go uncounted.

As Anthony Gregory of the [Independent Institute](#) writes:

America is a militarized society, seat of the world’s empire. The U.S. government is always at war with a handful of countries. We glorify killing and dying in our patriotic parades. Our Nobel Peace Prize winning president has bombed Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, and Libya.

Gregory is right.

As Pakistan continues to be bombarded by missiles fired from U.S. drones, information revealed in a recent report compiled jointly by the law schools of New York University and Stanford demonstrates that such attacks “cause considerable and under-accounted for harm to the daily lives of ordinary civilians, beyond death and physical injury.”

The report, entitled [“Living Under Drones: Death, Injury and Trauma to Civilians From US Drone Practices in Pakistan.”](#) contains tragic details of the myriad ways that President Obama’s death-by-drone program is devastating the lives of ordinary Pakistanis who have no connection to terror other than the fact that they are being constantly terrorized by the government of the United States.

Glen Greenwald of the *Guardian* (U.K.) [artfully describes the situation on the ground in Pakistan](#):

The people in the areas targeted by Obama’s drone campaign are being systematically terrorized. There’s just no other word for it. It is a campaign of terror — highly effective terror — regardless of what noble progressive sentiments one wishes to believe reside in the heart of the leader ordering it. And that’s precisely why the report, to its great credit, uses that term to describe the Obama



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policy: the drone campaign “terrorizes men, women, and children.

If the information contained in this report is accurate — and it is likely so given the hundreds of footnotes documenting its claims — it seems that the cure for terrorism has become worse than the disease. The United States’ response to the suspected presence of the suspected militants who might potentially pose a threat to our national security is the systematic and summary execution of thousands of innocent Pakistanis and Afghans. Adding to the injustice and the incalculable cost of such a policy is the fact that the Obama administration [doesn’t even bother to make a sincere effort to count the civilian casualties](#).

But what of the effect on Americans? Are Americans not being trained to regard violence as a swift and permanent answer to the difficult, long-term challenges that face our country? And this, like so many other issues, does not cleave along convenient Right/Left divides.

As a response to the rampage in Newtown, the National Rifle Association (NRA) [proposed putting armed guards in schools](#). Senator Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) introduced legislation that would [put National Guard troops on patrol in every school in America](#). “Is it not part of the national defense to make sure that your children are safe?” Boxer asked rhetorically at a Capitol Hill press conference.

As Anthony Gregory observed, the only difference between the solutions offered by the presumably right-wing NRA and the admittedly left-wing Barbara Boxer is the “uniforms worn by the armed guards.”

Sadly, armed guards are everywhere and will likely soon be in our schools. In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the federal government placed armed guards at every airport, endowed with the authority to disregard the Fourth Amendment and common decency and strip search the elderly, the infirm, and the innocent.

As Gregory accurately reports:

SWAT teams have become more ruthless, the domestic drones have been unleashed, the wars abroad have escalated, and the same federal institutions whose gun control measures left American civilians dead at Ruby Ridge and Waco can expect new targets throughout the land. The bipartisan police state commences, now that the left has gotten its own 9/11.

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