



Point Of View

A Look At Mass Shootings

BY GEORGE FOURNIER, M.D.
Yankton

The recent horrific massacre of 20 school children and six adults in the Sandy Hook school has rekindled the debate on gun control that likely will lead to measures effective at restricting legal gun ownership, but ineffective at preventing such incidents in the future.

A more rational approach is to have a comprehensive analysis of each and every mass and attempted mass shooting in an effort to understand those factors which either enhanced or limited the loss of life. Preventing such tragedies is the most laudable goal, but any law that falls short of confiscating every gun and round of ammunition in the country, and sequesters every individual with an anger management problem is likely to be minimally effective.

To begin to understand the problem of mass shootings in the U.S., I suggest that pro-gun and anti-gun advocates alike look to unbiased sources of information such as Wikipedia for factual non biased information on specific mass shootings.

I am doing that, and thus far I had analyzed the Columbine High School, Virginia Tech, University of Texas Tower Sniper shootings. It's clearly not a comprehensive list of shootings, but what is common to all these events is that the perpetrator was of above average intelligence, premeditated the event, had a clear plan of action and in every case exhibited warning signs many months or even years before carrying out the murders. How quickly the perpetrator was able to kill his victims varied considerably. In the case of the Columbine and Virginia Tech shootings, all of the killing was done within 15 minutes of the first shot being fired while the victims were trapped in rooms. In the UT Tower shooting Charles Whitman, the perpetrator, was dead hour and 50 minutes after killing his first victim. He placed himself in a defensible position which not only limited police access but also permitted the shooting people scattered across the campus.

No gun law short of banning and confiscation all guns would have prevented or even mitigated the loss of life in any of these instances. In Columbine shot-guns and carbines firing pistol ammunition were used. In Virginia Tech, hand guns were used, and in the UT Tower shooting, three people were killed at short range in the Tower itself with a shotgun, and 11 more were killed by a low capacity 6 mm bolt-action deer rifle at distances as far as 500 yards.

In the Sandy Hook shooting, the fact that the perpetrator used a semiautomatic assault style rifle is almost irrelevant. A pump action shotgun would have been just as effective.

From just these four incidents, two thoughts come to mind.

All of the perpetrators had serious anger management problems that were ignored or ineffectively dealt with. Charles Whitman did seek help, but no effective help was available. He ultimately was found to have a malignant brain tumor located in a region of the brain that could have affected his emotional state. All of the perpetrators should have been put into a

controlled environment that ensured no access to firearms.

The second thought is that the vast majority of these mass shootings occur at short range, in crowded and confined "gun free" zones where the potential victims have limited avenues of escape. Under these conditions even a single-shot shotgun would suffice to kill a large number of people within a few minutes well before the police arrive on the scene.

Two measures are needed. First, a system and policy that allows for rapid first responders that can challenge, distract and even kill the perpetrator within a couple of minutes of the start of the shooting. This means that a person or persons on scene be given the means and authority to use a weapon to subdue the attacker. In schools and universities, certain designated faculty or staff, known only to the administration, could be trained equipped and allowed rapid access to a firearm, while maintaining a prohibition on students from having firearms on campus. Armed guards are likely to be minimally effective since they are likely to be the first victim of a shooter who has planned his crime for months.

The second provision is to rehearse the faculty and staff as a whole on methods of hiding and escape, in a manner analogous to fire drills. Perhaps the bullet proofing of doors could be done. In the Virginia Tech shooting, a professor was killed when the shooter used his 9 mm pistol to shoot through the door as the professor was locking it. The shooter then gained access to the students in the class and killed several of them.

Anti-gun activists are much like individuals with phobias to snakes. Should we ban all snakes by killing them all? To do so would ignite a big rat problem. The fear is an irrational one.

I personally feel more threatened by teenage drivers with cell phones. A rational person with a loaded gun realizes the potential for a fatal accident if gun safety rules are not followed. A driver texting does not. Are we to ban teens from cell phones and cars? Are we to ban adults with teenage children from owning cell phones on the fear that the teen will steal it and drive while answering e-mail? After all, texting and driving is thought to contribute to 23 percent of all auto accidents in the US and is responsible for more than 10,000 traffic fatalities a year, a much bigger problem than school shootings and certainly no less tragic.

In conclusion, much can and should be learned from the specifics of each mass and attempted mass shooting. Schools and universities should realize that the conditions under which they currently operate make them unique and attractive targets for the deranged individual mad at the world. They need to adopt policies and procedures that allow the faculty and staff to protect themselves and their students. Our medical-legal system also has to change to identify those individuals with mental and personality disorders that are high risk for perpetrating mass murder, and treat or sequester these individuals. Only through more sophisticated and enlightened policies can we hope to preserve our right and freedom to bear arms.

Pierre Report

Progress On Economic Development?

BY STATE REP. BERNIE HUNHOFF
D-District 18 (Yankton)

Nebraska's governor wants to replace the Cornhusker state's income tax with more sales taxes. Iowa's governor wants to lower business property taxes. And here in South Dakota, there's a hue and cry to lower the sales and contractor's excise taxes for large corporate projects.

Governors from all three states want to cut those taxes as a way to attract more economic development activity. They argue that the taxes are keeping companies from expanding or locating in their respective states.

The governors' goals of more and better jobs is praise-worthy, and we all want taxes to be as low as possible. But numerous studies indicate that companies don't make decisions on when to expand or where to expand based on taxation. A new Iowa study reported in last week's *Des Moines Register* indicated that companies make such decisions based on transportation and utility costs, workforce quality and costs, education, quality of life and other factors.

Companies that actually do locate based largely on tax rates are probably not the kind of company you want in your town.

Look around Yankton and you'll find that many of our major employers — Kolberg-Portec, Cimpf's, Avera Sacred Heart Hospital, Applied Engineering and even this newspaper, the *Press and Dakotan* — started very small and grew to become important sectors of our Yankton economy. None of the above have ever lobbied



B. Hunhoff

me for lower taxes.

That's the kind of economic development legislators hope to encourage as we wrestle with how to invest your hard-earned tax dollars. I'm hopeful that we can make South Dakota competitive with other states for wind farms, pass the tourism industry's self-funded tax, create some workforce development initiatives and start a new need-based college scholarship program for students from low-income families. We also need to expand health care coverage for low-income adults so we have a healthy workforce that isn't always a broken arm away from bankruptcy. That's economic development, too, especially if you are a low income worker.

Because voters said "no" to the Large Projects Development Fund in the November general election, we're having this open and honest discussion on what constitutes economic development and how it should be funded. Democrats and Republicans are meeting in small groups, working on all of the above concepts and more. The governor and his staff, much to their credit, are encouraging this collaboration.

I and many other legislators will still insist that all things being equal, everyone should pay the same taxes. Government shouldn't pick winners and losers in the marketplace. And we will continue to argue that corporate incentives shouldn't come at the expense of education, which is badly under-funded. With those understandings, I'm here to listen and compromise and cooperate to create better jobs for South Dakotans.

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION | OUR VIEW

President Should Reassess Drones

On the day President Obama was telling the nation in his inaugural address that a state of perpetual war was unnecessary and undesirable, this nation arguably reaffirmed its commitment to that state of existence.

This commitment came from Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, who said during a television interview that unmanned drones will be integral to U.S. counter-terrorism efforts for many years to come. "The reality is it's going to be a continuing tool of national defense in the future," Panetta predicted.

And that looms as a dire warning. The successes that have been recorded by the deployment of drone strikes to take out integral elements of terrorist organizations have been highly lauded. Those successes have admittedly been plentiful, or so it has been reported, and it serves as ample motivation to continue using these extraordinary weapons.

But the high upside of using unmanned drones in countries such as Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen is outweighed ultimately by the deep, dark downside of these weapons. While they do kill terrorists, they also reportedly inflict collateral damage in the form of dead civilians and growing resentment among the populations in nations where these drones are used.

Pakistan may serve as a prime example. The U.S. military and/or the CIA have been conducting drone strikes there since 2004, and several reports claim that innocent civilians, including children, have been killed along with the intended targets. The exact numbers are hard to pin down, however. For instance, the Pakistani government claims that drone strikes from early 2006 through spring 2009 killed 14 al-Qaida leaders, but at a collateral cost of 687 civilians. Also, Daniel L. Byman of the Brookings Institute figured in 2009 that about 10 civilians are killed for each legitimate target that is taken out. And the CIA reported that since May 2010, more than 600 terrorists had been killed without a single civilian casualty. Given the secrecy that shrouds the program, widely conflicting accounts are no surprise, which conveniently clouds the issue.

But in Pakistan itself, the fallout is more definitive. Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik has condemned drone strikes, saying that a majority of its victims have been civilians. The "drone war" in that country has fueled deep resentment among Pakistanis; a survey conducted in that country last year showed overwhelming opposition to the program, with 74 percent of respondents viewing America — its ally — as the enemy.

So, drones may be an effective tool in decapitating select terrorist elements, but are they self-defeating? If we are killing, say, 10 civilians for every legitimate target hit, are we not cultivating resentment and sowing the seeds for new enemies to come? Are we not doing more long-term harm for the sake of short-term success? Recalling the ghosts of Vietnam, are we not losing the "hearts and minds" we need to win in order to truly prevail?

In his inaugural speech Monday, Obama proclaimed: "We, the people, still believe that enduring security and lasting peace do not require perpetual war. ... (W)e are also heirs to those who won the peace and not just the war, who turned sworn enemies into the surest of friends. ..." If he truly believes in his own words, the president needs to seriously re-evaluate the wisdom of drone warfare. If we are making more enemies than we are killing, the program is a disaster in the making. There must be a better way to wage counter-terrorism activities — a way that doesn't drive people who should be our friends into the arms of our enemies. This tactic could haunt us for many years to come.

kmh

OUR LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

■ Please limit letters to 300 words or less. (During political campaigns, letters related to the campaign may be limited to 150 words.) Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

■ In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

■ Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

■ Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Jan. 23, the 23rd day of 2013. There are 342 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Jan. 23, 1973, President Richard Nixon announced an accord had been reached to end the Vietnam War, and would be formally signed four days later in Paris.

On this date: In 1789, Georgetown University was established in present-day Washington, D.C.

In 1845, Congress decided all national elections would be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

In 1932, New York Gov. Franklin D. Roosevelt announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination. In 1933, the 20th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the so-called "Lame Duck Amendment," was ratified as Missouri approved it.

In 1937, 17 people went on trial in Moscow during Joseph Stalin's "Great Purge." (All were convicted of conspiracy; all but four were executed.)

In 1943, critic Alexander Woolcott suffered a fatal heart attack during a live broadcast of the CBS radio program "People's Platform."

In 1950, the Israeli Knesset approved a resolution affirming Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

In 1960, the U.S. Navy-operated bathyscaphe Trieste carried two men to the deepest known point in the Pacific Ocean, reaching a depth of more than 35,000 feet.

In 1964, the 24th Amendment to the Constitution, eliminating the poll tax in federal elections, was ratified.

In 1968, North Korea seized the Navy intelligence ship USS Pueblo, charging its crew with being on a spying mission. (The crew was released 11 months later.)

In 1977, the TV mini-series "Roots," based on the Alex Haley novel, began airing on ABC.

In 1985, debate in Britain's House of Lords was carried on live television for the first time.

Ten years ago: The government of Kuwait said a Kuwaiti had confessed to the

shootings of two U.S. defense workers that left one dead. (The assailant, Sami al-Mutairi, was convicted and sentenced to death, but an appeals court commuted the sentence to life in prison.) Actress Nell Carter died in Beverly Hills, Calif., at age 54.

Five years ago: Tens of thousands of Palestinians poured into Egypt from Gaza after Palestinian militants used land mines to breach a barrier dividing the border town of Rafah. French Open winner Michael Chang was elected to the International Tennis Hall of Fame, and IMG creator Mark McCormack and Tennis Week magazine founder Eugene Scott were selected posthumously.

One year ago: Republican presidential contenders Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich clashed repeatedly in heated, personal terms in a crackling campaign debate in Tampa, Fla. In a rare defeat for law enforcement, the Supreme Court unanimously agreed to bar police from installing GPS technology to track suspects without first getting a judge's approval.

Today's Birthdays: Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg, D-N.J., is 89. Actress Jeanne Moreau is 85. Actress Chita Rivera is 80. Actor-director Lou Antonio is 79. Actor Gil Gerard is 70. Actor Rutger Hauer is 69. Rhythm-and-blues singer Jerry Lawson (The Persuasions) is 69. Sen. Thomas R. Carper, D-Del., is 66. Singer Anita Pointer is 65. Actor Richard Dean Anderson is 63. Rock musician Bill Cunningham is 63. Rock singer Robin Zander (Cheap Trick) is 60. Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa is 60. Princess Caroline of Monaco is 56. Singer Anita Baker is 55. Reggae musician Earl Falconer (UB40) is 54. Actress Gail O'Grady is 50. Actress Mariska Hargitay is 49. Rhythm-and-blues singer Marc Nelson is 42. Actress Tiffani Thiessen is 39. Rock musician Nick Harmer (Death Cab for Cutie) is 38. Christian rock musician Nick DePatie (Kutless) is 28. Singer-actress Rachel Crow is 15.

Thought for Today: "It is easy to get a thousand prescriptions but hard to get one single remedy." — Chinese proverb.

FROM THE BIBLE

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you. 1 Corinthians 11:23. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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