

My thoughts on reducing gun violence as posted on the White House, We the People, website on 21 December 2012.

I'm a retired Air Force Officer, a gun-owner, firearms dealer, and gunsmith and my heart goes out to the children and families of the Connecticut school shooting. I'm a father of children ranging from 4 to 25 years old and I cannot imagine or fathom the devastation those families are dealing with. As I watched the tragedy unfold live, I could only weep and pray for those precious children and their Moms and Dads. I'm utterly heartbroken about the senseless violence that sick individual committed against innocent children. In my military service, I've observed death and violence firsthand, seen fatherless, motherless, and childless souls absolutely broken holding the body of their dead loved one. I do not understand these things but have an unshakeable faith that the just God of all will one day make all things right. With this perspective, I respectfully and humbly offer my observations and suggestions on a way forward, so please hear me out.

Here are the facts. More gun control does not correlate to a safer America. In every state where law-abiding citizens are allowed to carry concealed firearms violent crime has gone down. In states and municipalities where more gun control has been in effect to counter gun violence, gun violence has gone up. The past assault weapon ban did absolutely nothing to reduce violent gun crime and another ban will only keep these type of firearms out of the hands of law-abiding citizens. Gun control only keeps guns out of the hands of those we trust to have them...law-abiding citizens. Gun violence has increased exponentially in Australia and Great Britain where the people's fundamental right to self-defense with a firearm has been taken away by their government. Why...because an unarmed populace is a soft target and criminals know that. When is the last time you heard of a violent criminal paying any heed to gun laws? Criminals are happy when the government takes guns out of the hands of law-abiding citizens...criminals are emboldened and say "Thank-You" for making it easier to prey upon the innocent. Demonizing guns for violence is about as smart and effective as demonizing spoons for making people fat. The Murrah Federal Building bombing in Oklahoma City, and the attacks of 911 were the most destructive acts of violence in our Nation's recent history and they were committed using a rental truck, fertilizer, and commercial airliners. Have we considered outlawing any of those things?...of course not because those things are tools, just as guns are tools. Guns are not the problem, the real problems are a society that glorifies violence, children growing up without the nurturing of a loving mother and a father, and rampant drug use and dependency that impairs peoples' judgment and creates a lifestyle and environment of crime. All of these things are tied together and are much larger social issues for which I don't have all the answers...but at least I can see the real problem.

Now, what are some practical things we can do to move forward to protect our children in schools? Here are my suggestions. All schools should have a lockdown access system. Principals and other selected school faculty and staff should be authorized to carry concealed provided they are licensed, CLEET or similarly trained to do so, and participate in real-life practice drills. A self-inflicted bullet stopped Adam Lanza...it is most grievous that bullet was not from a licensed concealed carrying school faculty member or parent as Adam was shooting his way *into* the school. Guns will continue to come into schools...so who would you rather have the guns in schools, concealed on law-abiding faculty and parents, or openly by more Adam Lanzas...think about it. To think that having an armed security guard or policeman present on every public school in America is a costly and impractical notion and a poor response to the real problem. Better, why not allow licensed parents or licensed school faculty to carry concealed...would those individuals not have a greater vested interest in interdicting a violent school shooter?

The President and Congress should not rush gun control into law so quickly, this is nothing more than reactionary and agenda based political gaming...and as in the past will do nothing except to further restrict law-abiding citizens' access and increase criminals' opportunity to prey on the innocent. As gun owners it is our right and responsibility to help prevent violent crime just as voting is our right and responsibility. Connecticut has some of the toughest gun control laws in the nation, yet that did nothing to deter this senseless violence. New York's recent new assault weapon and magazine capacity gun control law will only restrict law-abiding citizens access...it will do nothing to keep these weapons out of criminal hands or stem gun violence. So it just

does not make sense to enact more gun control in such a rushed manner. I don't have the answers but I see this as an opportunity for Americans, gun owners and non-gun owners, to come together to better understand why we are so violent. It is our responsibility as Americans to work together to find solutions to minimize this kind of violence, and to develop practical ways, when prevention fails, to immediately interdict and shut down active shooters in public places. This is truly a complex social problem and it is irresponsible for the current administration, both Democrat and Republican, to think they can understand the root causes and rush through productive changes to address the issues in only a few months. It is equally irresponsible for "We the People" to support such a reactionary response.

Here are some ideas I'm thinking about. Just like we tax cigarettes and alcohol why don't we tax the snot out of violent music and video games. If people want violence, they should at least start by having to pay a premium for it. I'm also in favor of background checks for anyone receiving a gun, new or used. In disagreement with many of my gun-owning friends and colleagues, I think every non FFL-licensed person (i.e. private citizen) selling or giving a gun should be required to have the potential receiver fill out a Firearms Transaction Record, Form 4473, verify their identity, and be required to call in (or fax in) the background check on any potential receiver. This can be implemented without registering guns but will only work if the present laws on the books are enforced and violators are prosecuted. To me this is not more gun control; it is just common sense...just like I don't think you should be able to build a house in this country without a fire sprinkler system installed. More gun control is not the real answer, this is a social issue...guns, like pipe-bombs and airliners, are just tools that warped individuals will get, regardless of the laws, and will use to harm their own kind.

"We the People" cannot let this further divide us as a nation, we must rise above and work together to find practical solutions. Just as passengers of flight 93 rushed the cockpit that fateful 9/11 day, took that airliner back from the terrorists and crashed it into an open field, we too must be wholly committed to bring about some good out of the Connecticut tragedy. Let's Roll America, this must be our legacy to honor the memory of those precious children.

Respectfully,
John Sandifer
Major, USAF (ret.)