

Good Morning, Connecticut

Few expect newspaper Editors to be unbiased on their Opinion pages when it comes to guns. Many believe these papers will not even consider printing editorial views which challenge their previously published positions. Such prior restraint against open consideration of competing ideas, especially when case histories or documented evidence support the challenge, is not in the best interest of our state or this country. Recently **The New York Times** published an editorial under the title: **Dangerous Gun Myths**.

The following challenge to the conclusions of that editorial was sent to Thomas Feyer, a New York Times editor. The paper was not interested. The Times is partially correct: there are many Dangerous Myths about guns and violence in the land, but the big surprise is that the Times is a prominent source for many of them.

Here is the challenge to the Times, Governor Cuomo and Governor Malloy.

It is based on facts:

Rather than paraphrase the details, here is a brief background quote FYI from **Point Blank** by Kleck:

You might find the rest of this story interesting because, like The New York Times, the publisher of **The Orlando Sentinel**, as well as the Chief of Police in Orlando, disapproved of civilian guns for self-defense. The women knew what they had to do to protect themselves, and they did it: sales of guns to women went off the charts. The police department knew what the women did not: training was essential, and would be necessary to avert a tragedy. The people of Orlando wanted to protect themselves against crime. By working together they eliminated the crime they feared most, and made their city safer for everyone: the police department trained over 2,500 women in firearm safety, and criminals got the message - they left.

The Connecticut Legislature recently held hearings on to Reduce Gun Violence. I was there from beginning to end:

As to semi-automatic rifles with a military appearance, Mayor John DeStefano shared 20 years of experience as Mayor of New Haven when he spoke at the recent hearings on Gun Violence in Hartford. His first words were, "Its not about assault weapons..." He has lived with and knows the truth of the matter, but unlike most politicians, and unfortunately news media, he was willing to site facts to define the problem of gun violence in his city: gangs first, and then drugs. The Mayor pulled no punches.

The deranged killer beset by madness is indeed a horrible, needless tragedy. There is no doubt whatsoever that every mass shooting has been at the hands of a seriously troubled individual. Although this type of threat is actually far less a common threat than media would have us believe, these crimes are absolutely unacceptable. Keeping all firearms out of the hands of the violent is a goal upon which we can all agree to act.

The New York Times likes stories; we all do. Here are two that are very short, and both clearly demonstrate the desirability of having the civilian version of our infantry rifle for your defense:

In Los Angeles on one April 29th, the verdict on a police beating of Rodney King triggers riots. Chaos lasts 6 days. The Police desert the city on Day One. A shop keeper refuses to abandon his store, and when a gang of looters approaches, armed with his assault rifle he stands his ground. The rifle saves his shop, and it saves his life. He lives but 53 die, over 2000 are wounded.

In New Orleans on August 29th, the Eye of Katrina passes over the city. By the next day looting is rampant; gangs of gunmen rampage. The following day, with 80% of the city flooded the Governor finally calls in the Guard armed with military weapons, but the looting, burning buildings and mayhem continues. One man declines to evacuate and abandon his home. Later as a gang approaches, he stands on the front perch of his house holding an assault rifle, his ultimate protection. Not a shot is fired but the looters leave, looking for easier targets.

The Governors of Connecticut and New York cry that these rifles are not used for defense when they are. When there is a breakdown in civil order, even the police are loath to confront a gang with anything less than an assault rifle, and preferably a true military weapon with select fire. When will the next riot occur, where will it happen, we just don't know, but some are prepared.

I asked the members of the Sub-committee on Gun Violence if they had insurance: home owners, liability, fire, theft, hurricane, flood, earthquake. While they declined to raise their hands, we all knew they had insurance. "How many expect their house to burn down?" No one did. But they all had insurance. Deciding ahead of time that one wants economic protection against this or that calamity is not uncommon. It is seen as a reasonable thing to do. Hartford is a center for reliable insurance: you can decide how much you need and easily get the policy you want.

Guns for one's personal defense are another kind of insurance. Like insurance, there is a hierarchy of tools to cope with increasing levels of threat: revolver, semi-automatic pistol, shotgun, bolt-action or semi-automatic rifle, and then there is the fully automatic machine gun and for a nation at war a host of heavy combat weaponry. Crime is still relatively rare in the US: only 1 person in 4 can expect to enjoy returning home to find they have been the victims of a burglar. Being burglarized, assaulted, raped, shot or murdered are all life changing, or ending, events that none look forward to - except the perpetrators looking to gain from crime. Riots and general chaos are still statistically infrequent but within memory as having happened not all that long ago, but happily taking place somewhere else.

Now come the question: should you be so unfortunate as to be in the wrong place at a very wrong time, do you want to be able to defend yourself and your family? If the answer is yes, with a gun, then you must first get the training you absolutely must have in the judicious use of deadly force. Start with a book: **Keeping Your Family Safe** by two medical MD's Tim Wheeler and John Whipfler. Most of the time, the best defense will be to leave - exit, run, drive, get away as far as you can as fast as you can. The safest defense of all will have been to be situationally aware that something was not right and to have left before a confrontation can occur.

The more deadly the force you employ for defense, the more intense and thorough your training and preparation must be: courts and juries, especially in the northeast, will tend to assume the person holding the gun is guilty. There is no such thing as knowing too much, being too skilled, or doing too much to avoid a lethal confrontation. However, when you are attacked you do have the right to defend yourself.

Back to our Governors: Mr. Cuomo and Mr. Malloy both claim military-style rifles are not used for target shooting or sport:

But they are, and the numbers of law abiding competitors firing their AR-15 or an M16 at the National Matches at Camp Perry, Ohio, and taking part in local and regional matches leading up to the Nationals, number in the tens of thousands. Yet politicians and the press continually demonize these rifles and vilify their owners. These competitors, some active or ex-military, many just interested civilians, are hardly part of the problem of gun violence anywhere in our country. They are in fact our last best defense, and are one reason no foreign force would consider invading us.

According to some anti-gun politicians, assault weapons have left police departments outgunned, even when they know their department's arsenal includes a battery of the Heckler & Kock MP5 submachine gun, a current favorite among personal defensive weapons for the law enforcement professional.

Finally some maintain that even if the semi-automatic military style rifle is the best weapon for defense in the worst case, and even if it is used for competition and sport (and it is ideal for small game hunting), the assault weapon is responsible for an intolerable wave of violence and homicide which plagues our country today. Really?

Sales of the military style firearm have been unprecedented during the post-ban years, but their use to commit crime is neither what many expected nor others claimed. According to the FBI Uniform Crime Data (please see the FBI web site for Expanded Homicide Data - Table 8) despite increased sales of all firearms in recent years, the use of rifles to kill people has been decreasing. In 2007 there were 14,916 murders and 453 of these were with a rifle. In 2011 there were a total of 12,664 murders: 323 were with a rifle.

In criminal use, the assault rifle is typically implicated just 4% to 5% of the times a rifle is used, which is less than 3% of the homicide total: the assault rifle is responsible for one eighth of 1 percent of homicides in the US. Prior to Newtown, a preliminary FBI number for 2012 was 18 incidents. Newtown was beyond any words a tragedy and tipping point for violence awareness.

In every case, it is the killer that did the killing.

There are always signals: three days before Sandy Hook the perpetrator tried to buy a gun and was disqualified by the background check. Nothing was done. Until three days later when it was too late.

The killer killed to get his guns. When magazine size is restricted, his kind will just bring more guns. England has banned handguns: mad men there have attacked schools with a wave of arson, home-invasions and burglaries have increased, and handgun deaths doubled over the 10 years following the ban because the criminal did not turn in his guns.

We have a scapegoat: for every 1250 murders just 1 is killed by a criminal or mad man with a military style semi-automatic rifle.

Is 1 too many - you bet.

"Ban the gun," is the politically correct solution for some.

Is it justice when government decides to punish many for the crimes of the very, very few, no matter how heinous? Something has gone very, very wrong if it comes to this. Safety is desirable: we depend on being safe so we can seek Life, Liberty and pursue Happiness, but the solution to ban guns is un-necessary. Neither you nor the police will be there to protect me and my family should our town erupt in a once in a one hundred or five hundred year storm of violence.

Just saying, "It will never happen." is not good enough.

In response to notorious battles between bootleggers, 1934 the government recognized that machine guns a danger to society when in the hands of criminals. Since then it remains legal to own a machine gun (even in Connecticut) as long as the gun was made before 1986 (when Congress saw fit to solve a problem that did not exist). But, one must first be fingerprinted, under-go a thorough background check by the FBI, apply to ATF and pay a \$200 transfer fee. The entire process takes months and a machine gun is expensive to buy, expensive to shoot, and the new owner is now responsible for a Class III weapon.

Since 1934, there have been 2 murders with a legally owned machine gun, and one of these was by a policeman. Guns may or may not frighten you, this or that model may make you more or less anxious, but the real danger is not the gun, the real danger lies in the mind of the individual prone to violence.

For a discussion on children and violent entertainment, please see **Stop Teaching our Kids to Kill** by Grossman and De Gaetano

The Quest continues...

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