

Reprinted with permission -- USCCA www.USCCA.com**» SEVERAL MONTHS AFTER THE MASSACRE**

in Newtown, Connecticut, my 7-year-old son asked me if I thought something like that could happen at his school, which happens to be a private Catholic school in my home city. I assured him that nothing like that would ever happen here, and that even if a bad guy did get into his school, our police department was so good and so fast that they would stop the bad guy before he hurt anyone. Of course, I was lying to him. I feel a bit more confident in my answers when I assure my son that terrorists will never again take over airplanes and fly them into buildings, but for that answer, I have a bit more to fall back on considering the response the nation took after 9/11 compared to its response after Newtown.

After 9/11, the U.S. met the threat by installing sophisticated body scanners at airports, hardening cockpit doors with impenetrable steel, creating an Armed Pilot program, and expanding the armed Air Marshal program. The terrorists of 9/11 were fairly confident that if they couldn't bluff their way into the cockpit, they'd be able to breach the door, where they'd find a defenseless crew tucked into their very own "gun-free zone." Today, Al-Qaeda knows that even if a cockpit door could be breached (however unlikely), there is a high probability that the terrorist's last memory would be a muzzle flash as an armed pilot shot him in the face. A 9/11 response was needed after Newtown, but today, most of our schools remain as unprotected as they were the day before the Newtown tragedy. Too many public and private establishments remain undefended and even advertise that fact with "gun-free zone" signs, letting potential criminals or mass murderers know that no one there will stop them. We remain a nation where even members of the most virulent anti-gun groups have grown to not only accept, but expect, armed guards to protect our banks, our museums, our airports, our politicians, and our celebrities, yet they somehow find the thought of armed guards protecting our schools and our children abhorrent. In the words of John Caille (who pens "Defcon 1" for *CCM*), "If that's not misplaced priorities, I don't know what is."

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT SCHOOL SHOOTERS?

After the single lesson of 9/11, the nation went on a war footing and changed the way we protect our airports and our airplanes. But after the lessons of Columbine, Virginia Tech, and Newtown, the anti-gun forces have continued to ignore the obvious failure of “gun-free zones,” and instead continue to propose a host of anti-gun bills including renewed limits on magazine capacity and bans on sporting rifles, believing that the passage of these bills would limit future carnage of school shooters. But assuming that any limitation on gun type or magazine capacity would have limited or avoided the carnage caused by these shooters would be like assuming that the 9/11 attacks could have been avoided if box cutters had been banned before the attack. In this three-part series, I’ll not only be looking at the magazine capacity argument in detail, I’ll also look at whether “gun-free zones” figure into the planning of these mass murders and whether victim response can affect the outcome. I’ll summarize this series with a four-point plan designed to eliminate the scourge of these murderers once and for all.

To start, let’s take a look at the magazine capacity argument.

Magazine Capacity	Reloads Required per Minute	Rounds per Minute at a Moderate Rate of Fire
5 rounds	11	55
10 rounds	7.5	75
30 rounds	3.3	100

» The table above shows how many rounds can be fired per minute with a moderate rate of fire of two rounds per second and a moderate reload rate of 3 seconds per magazine change. An experienced shooter would be able to fire at approximately twice this rate.

IS MAGAZINE CAPACITY THE REAL KILLER?

It seems that before the blood is done drying after mass shootings, the anti-gun movement renews their rallying cry that the reason these monsters are able to murder so many victims in a short period of time is because of the rate of fire en-

abled by magazine capacities larger than five or ten rounds, and by the nature of semi-automatic firearms. So that begs the question, exactly how many rounds can be fired per minute when using magazine capacities of five rounds, 10 rounds, or 30 rounds, and, would a lower round capacity have affected the outcome at any mass shooting? To help answer that question, I ran a series of live fire tests using magazines topped off to those different round counts and using a moderate rate of fire of two rounds per second, and a moderate magazine change rate of three seconds. The results are in the table below left.

Having those baseline numbers, the “it’s the magazine” crowd would have a strong argument if it could be demonstrated that mass shooters who used 30-round magazines had achieved a rate of fire of 100 rounds per minute or more, but unfortunately for them, the facts don’t support their argument. The table below shows the actual rate of fire for the four most notorious school shooters. It clearly shows that their actual rate of fire is not only dramatically below what’s possible with a moderate rate of fire us-

including the shooting at the Century Theater in Aurora, Colorado and the shooting at Fort Hood.

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED

So here’s what we know—every recent mass shooter going back to Columbine and including the deadliest shootings at Virginia Tech and Newtown has shot at a rate of fire less than 60 percent of what’s achievable with five-round magazines, and not more than 30 percent of what would be possible using 30-round magazines. Even James Holmes (the Aurora theater shooter) who had a 100-round magazine achieved a rate of fire no more than eight to 14 rounds per minute, which is less than 15 to 25 percent of what would have been possible if he had brought five-round magazines and left the 100-round magazine at home. Lanza, who entered Sandy Hook Elementary with ten 30-round magazines, didn’t even take advantage of the larger capacity before reloading—three magazines were unused, and four others were left with 10, 11, 13, and 14 rounds remaining.

So here’s the problem with the magazine capacity argument: these killers

Shooter	Location	Dead	Rounds Fired	Time	Rounds per Minute
Seung-Hui Cho	Virginia Tech	30	174	11 minutes	15
Adam Lanza	Newtown	26	154	5—9 minutes ¹	17—31
Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold	Columbine	13	188	47 minutes	4
Jeff Weise	Red Lake	7	45	9 minutes ²	5

» ¹Police records indicate that Lanza shot his way into Sandy Hook Elementary at 9:35 a.m. and at 9:40 a.m. (5 minutes after the shooting began) the last shot was heard, which is believed to be Lanza taking his own life. Police entered the school four minutes later, at 9:44 a.m. (9 minutes after the shooting began). Police also reported that they believe Lanza fired one round approximately every two seconds. ²All 7 of Weise’s victims were killed within 3 minutes, yet Weise went on to shoot and wound 5 other victims for another 6 minutes for a total of 9 minutes of shooting before Weise took his own life.

ing 30-round magazines, they are all less than 60 percent of a moderate rate of fire when using five-round magazines.

That same rate of fire is reflected in other mass shootings outside of schools,

are not using a high rate of fire; they’re not even using a moderate rate of fire. Their rate of fire could be described as sluggish, no faster than a lever-action or bolt-action rifle. While the anti-gun

Shooter	Location	Dead	Rounds Fired	Time	Rounds per Minute
James Holmes	Aurora	12	70	5—9 minutes ³	8—14
Nidal Malik Hasan	Ford Hood	13	214	10 minutes	21

» ³The timeline of the Aurora Theater shooting indicates that Holmes opened fire at 12:37, the first 911 call was received at 12:39 (2 minutes after the shooting began), the first police arrived on the scene at 12:41 (4 minutes after the shooting began), police began to surround the theater by 12:42 as witnesses reported that there was still “someone actively shooting” inside (5 minutes after the shooting began) and Holmes was apprehended outside the back of the theater at 12:49 (9 minutes after the shooting began).

crowd describes their rate of fire as being attainable only with “military-style” firearms and “high-capacity” magazines, their rate of fire is at or below one very well known military firearm, which advertised a sustained rate of fire of 30 rounds per minute. The problem is, that firearm was the lever-action Henry Rifle, popular among Union soldiers in the Civil War. Let me say that again—the rate of fire for the six shooters profiled above was no faster than the very first repeating rifle, put into service 150 years ago.

So if these shooters aren’t depending upon magazine capacity or a high rate of fire to kill as many victims as possible, what are they depending upon to virtually guarantee their success? Looking at the tables containing the statistics on the six shooters again, the answer is obvious. It’s not magazine capacity; it’s the uninterrupted time these shooters have in gun-free zones.

TIME IS THE KILLER

The large number of victims killed during school shootings is not occurring because of magazine capacity or a high rate of fire, it is occurring because these shooters have each had 5 to 9 minutes or more of uninterrupted time to commit their murders before police are able to commit to an interior response. While the response time of police to the scenes of these crimes is often commendable (the police arrived outside the Aurora theater an amazing 90 seconds after the first 911 calls came in), arriving on the scene is one thing; entering the building

to stop the shooter is another. While the Aurora police were on scene 90 seconds after the first 911 calls, those calls weren’t made until 2 minutes into the shooting, and the police didn’t apprehend Holmes until 9 minutes after the shooting began. This isn’t a knock on the police; it’s the reality of what happens when the only good guys with guns are coming from miles away, and who require at least several minutes to formulate a plan once arriving on scene.

In the “gun-free zones” of our nation’s schools, these shooters don’t just believe, they *know* that a counter-attack will only come from the outside, and they’ll get a loud and dramatic warning of the upcoming counter-attack as they hear sirens approaching from all directions. Those sirens tell them that they have at least another four minutes or more to kill any remaining victims before police will enter the building. Again, they know that no counter-attack will be launched from within the school walls. It isn’t just what they believe; it’s what they know to be true. And so do we.

ARE “GUN-FREE ZONES” PART OF THE PROBLEM?

Much has been made of whether mass shooters gravitate toward gun-free zones, and whether the elimination of schools as gun-free zones could have an effect. The anti-gun crowd has done much to try to dispel the notion that these killers seek out schools or other locations that ban guns; one anti-gun group even tried to dismiss the argument that Fort Hood

was a gun free zone by claiming that the base police who flooded the area and exchanged fire with shooter Nidal Malik Hasan proves that Fort Hood was not a gun-free zone after all. But claiming that arriving police means an area isn’t a gun-free zone (even though soldiers on base were barred from carrying personal firearms by base policy) is the argument of an idiot. It doesn’t even deserve a response. Instead, let’s look at the facts—and John Lott, author of *More Guns, Less Crime* and *The Bias Against Guns* has them. “With just one single exception (the attack on congresswoman Gabby Giffords in Tucson in 2011) every public shooting since at least 1950 in the U.S. in which more than three people have been killed has taken place where citizens are not allowed to carry guns.” Lott further notes that James Holmes, the Aurora theater shooter, had at least *seven* movie theaters to choose from, all within a 20 minute drive of his home and all that were showing *The Dark Knight Rises*. The Century Theater that Holmes settled on wasn’t the closest, but it happened to be the only theater that posted “NO GUNS” signs, while the other six theaters had no such declaration. Those “NO GUNS” signs let Holmes know that he’d get the 5 to 9 minutes he needed.

Regardless of what the anti-gun movement tries to push, the fact is that mass shooters actively seek out soft targets, and the vast majority of schools are soft targets. No history of a mass shooter fighting their way through hardened security exists. Signs, school policies, state statutes, glass doors, unlocked doors, and unarmed staff do not create hardened targets. What they create instead is the perfect environment for these deranged individuals to successfully carry out their plans. If we change the environment, we stand a chance at changing their plans.

Just ask Al-Qaeda.

Next issue: *Can victim response make a difference during mass shootings?*

