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NRA's school scenario is a delusional fantasy

by Colman McCarthy

At Wilson High School in Washington, where I've been teaching peace studies classes for 28 years, armed police patrol the halls. They carry Glocks, a high-powered handgun not to be messed with. The police wear bulletproof vests. At the front door, officers, along with a phalanx of non-police guards, check for weapons as students pass through one of three metal detectors.

A week after the massacre of 20 first-graders and six adults at a Newtown, Conn., school on Dec. 14, Wayne LaPierre of the National Rifle Association called on Congress to "act immediately to appropriate whatever is necessary to put armed police officers in every single school in this nation" -- and get it done by early January when kids are back from winter break.

You'd think that would be enough for the NRA: students to be greeted every morning by heat-packing cops. Not so. It wants teachers, too, to be locked and loaded.

"The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun," said LaPierre in a tough-talking, media-lambasting press conference before hundreds of reporters in Washington.

Arming my fellow teachers and me: Let's imagine how that could work. Every school would need an indoor and outdoor firing range where we would undergo required target practice, before school or after. Incompetents -- those teachers rarely hitting the bull's-eye -- would be sacked. Sharp-shooting teachers, quick on the trigger and steady of hand, would earn pay raises much the way their salaries rise when students' test scores go up. Gun drills would replace fire drills, staged for teachers to practice. Dress them in armor and let them blast away with paintballs, like Civil War re-enactors.

Principals and assistant principals, with greater responsibilities for protecting the young ones, would be the head terminators, armed with Bushmaster semi-automatic rifles, the kind used by the Newtown killer.

Children could be deputized: Arm them with water pistols. Who knows? Squirting a meanie guy in the face might just do it.

I'm not sure if I could handle teaching at a fortress. What I am sure of is that LaPierre and the NRA's simplistic vision for keeping schools safe is as delusional a fantasy as first-graders stopping gunmen with water pistols. Once bullets start spraying, whether in battlefield combat or schoolhouse shootings, all that's predictable is that predictions are meaningless.

LaPierre, wildly shooting from the hip in rants not only against scribes but also producers of violent films and video games, took no questions from reporters. He dashed from the podium, a quick getaway that was a hit-and-run job. Cowardlike, the tough-talker lacked the toughness to go beyond reading an uncompromising prepared text that scorned everyone for gun violence except the NRA.

As the country moves on from Newtown, as it did from Columbine, Virginia Tech, Fort Hood, Tucson, Aurora and dozens of other scenes of gore, it braces for the next mass murder. Is there a doubt that one is coming? According to an ABC News special report on guns, America has more than 50,000 retail gun stores, exceeding the number of supermarkets and McDonald's combined. Customers keep coming. The *Washington Post* reports that the high-rolling "gun industry has been one of the brightest spots in the U.S. economy in recent years," with \$11.7 billion in sales and \$992 million in profits.

Researchers -- from the Children's Defense Fund to analysts like political scientist Robert Spitzer, who wrote *The Politics of Gun Control* -- have long reported that children raised in homes with guns are in far greater danger of being killed in a living room than a schoolroom.

For the record, I oppose gun control. I'm working for gun elimination. Confiscate all 300 million of them. For skeet shooters, collectors or hunters and the blood-sport set who take sadistic pleasure in pumping bullets into animals: Sorry, friends, you'll need to find other pastimes. The greater good -- the decreasing of suffering and slaughter -- demands it.

Is a gunless America probable? No. Is it possible? Yes. Not anytime soon, but, yes, possible. It's a thought.

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