



February 26, 2018

President's Waypoint: Arm Teachers?

Growing up on a horse ranch in Oregon, we had guns. We had a BB gun and a single shot 22 rifle. Both were used to plunk cans in target practice. I also completed, with a proud 100% score, the National Rifle Association's (NRA) gun safety course. That was more than 50 years ago and so much has changed in the world.

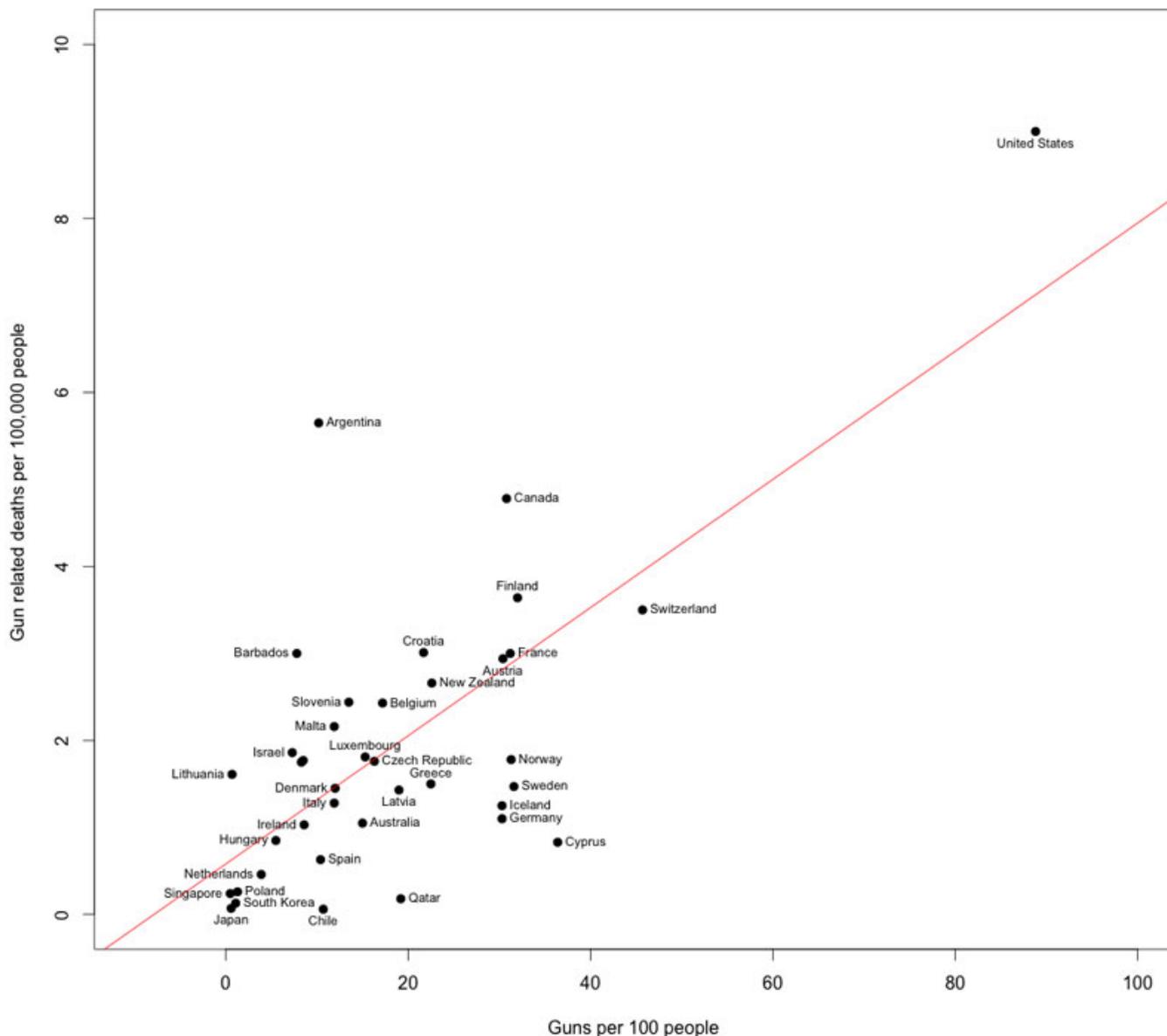
Following the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting, killing 20 children and six adults, NRA leader Wayne LaPierre challenged Congress to fund the arming of personnel in every school in America. [There were some schools that followed the advice](#), claiming that arming teachers 'can be done right.' For most, however, the call was treated as an extreme, fringe proposal and was rejected by educational leaders, law enforcement, and congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle.

On Tuesday, February 14, we were all sickened, when 14 children and three adults were killed at a high school in Florida. The perpetrator purchased the assault weapon (AR-15 rifle) legally from a nearby gun store, passing all background checks.

When asked how to prevent such classroom massacres in the future, President Donald Trump echoed LaPierre's clarion call – Arm America's Teachers. Both LaPierre and Trump's general argument is that the only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is with a good guy with a gun. In essence, their logic is that the more armed teachers we have, the better the odds are of stopping school violence before it escalates. [President Trump tweeted](#) that, "Armed Educators (and trusted people who work within a school) love our students and will protect them. Very smart people. Must be firearms adept & have annual training. Should get yearly bonus. Shootings will not happen again - a big & very inexpensive deterrent. Up to States."

President Trump's comments about arming teachers have suggested a quick and easy way to end mass school shootings in America. In reality, there is no quick and easy solution to this problem. To begin with, there is no evidence that indicates that increasing guns in schools' increases safety. In fact, there is a significant trend of evidence to the contrary in states where it's already legal for teachers to carry weapons. For example, at Idaho State University, a professor accidentally shot himself in the foot when his concealed handgun [discharged](#). In Utah, an elementary school teacher carrying a concealed weapon accidentally shot herself in the leg [as she used the restroom](#). In Pennsylvania, a group of elementary school students found a [loaded gun in the bathroom](#), where a teacher accidentally left it behind. These are just a few campus gun mishaps, which unfortunately make schools less safe.

More fundamental to the discussion of reducing mass school shootings is the lack of evidence that simply increasing the number of guns in circulation in the U.S. is the solution. The U.S. already has a huge number of guns. In fact, Americans now make up less than 5 percent of the world's population yet they own 42 percent of the world's privately held firearms. [There are now more guns than people in the United States.](#) With all these firearms, surely there should be a reduction in shootings. No, as researcher Joshua Tewksbury found, the U.S. has more gun related deaths per 100 people than the world's other developed countries (see chart below). The stark reality is that there is a direct relationship – With more guns, comes more gun-related deaths. Not surprising. For those interested, [Dr. Raeanne Napoleon](#) and students are organizing a related “March for our Lives” event, March 24th.



Data from [Joshua Tewksbury](#)

A final aspect of this idea of arming teacher has to do with human behavior. Specifically, being armed does not always mean individuals can properly respond to a mass shooting. Actually, shooting simulations have demonstrated that most armed individuals will not be able to stop an active shooter situation, actually getting themselves killed in the process. This [ABC News](#) report shows one such simulation. Even for highly trained police and firearms experts, stopping a mass shooting is difficult.

For all of these reasons, I cannot support the idea of arming teachers. I will be placing this topic for discussion at the College Planning Council (CPC) meeting next week, along with a discussion of what we can do on campus to stay safe.

Together forward,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anthony", written in a cursive style.