Exclusive

CDC Fires Top Gun Injury Researcher; Studies Lag. GOP Politics Are Blamed

Amid a frightening string of shooting sprees targeting students and young religious worshipers, most Americans assume that the Federal government’s scientific manpower and resources have been urgently deployed to examine the slaughter, and find ways to stop its recurrence.

Unfortunately, a PROBE investigation finds, nothing could be further from the truth.

On September 1, a few months after the Columbine High School massacre in Colorado, and a few weeks before seven children and their counselors were gunned down at Wedgewood Baptist Church, in Fort Worth, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in Atlanta, quietly fired the Fed’s pre-eminent gun violence researcher, Mark L. Rosenberg, M.D. The action, by CDC director Jeffrey P. Koplan, M.D., was the coup de grace in a campaign by gun enthusiasts and their congressional supporters to kill federal efforts to study gun injuries as a medical problem. The public health community’s assumption has been that these deaths may be amenable to scientific study and temporal changes, as are motor vehicle deaths, the model for the gun research effort.

History Recounted

Rosenberg, a psychiatrist, initiated CDC’s research into gun violence in the early 1980s, according to agency spokeswoman Mary Ann Fenley. He later was chosen by CDC chief — and now Surgeon General — David Satcher, M.D., to be permanent director of CDC’s new Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

“I feel very highly about Mark Rosenberg,” Satcher told PROBE late in September, at an American Medical Association news briefing in New York. “I appointed him!”

The Surgeon General declined, however, to comment on Rosenberg’s firing:

“I don’t want to get into that,” he said.

Rosenberg has the U.S. Public Health Service title of assistant surgeon general.

“Mark has been a giant on the world scene in saying that the peril of gun injury is a public health issue that can be approached like any other such issue, by doing research, designing interventions, and then modifying them if necessary,” says attorney and gun control advocate Rebecca Peters, LL.D., of Australia. She is a visiting fellow in justice studies at the Soros Foundation, in New York.

“There is a widespread perception among the public health community that the reason Rosenberg was so unceremoniously dumped is because he’s been identified by the gun lobby as their enemy,” Peters added. “I don’t think this ouster is a coincidence, given the upcoming presidential election.”

Pension is Preserved

CDC director Koplan removed Rosenberg from his directorship of the injury control center during the summer. As of September 1, Rosenberg was detailed to a non-federal job at a collaborative center for childhood well-being that is run by Emory University and the Carter Center, near Atlanta. This allows him to remain on the federal payroll long enough to qualify for his pension, associates say.

Rosenberg did not answer PROBE’s call to his home for comment. He rather referred the call to Fenley, at CDC. She

continued on page 4
**Follow-up**

**Marcia Angell Takes Helm At the NEJM**

Pathologist Marcia Angell, M.D. has climbed to the top of the masthead at the *New England Journal of Medicine*. She’s now editor-in-chief. We’re pleased that she’s there — and we congratulate her!

We are particularly pleased that a woman has advanced to the top job in medical publishing. We hope that Angell’s achievement will bring many more women into the ranks at the *NEJM* and other journals. Already, pediatrician Catherine D. DeAngelis, M.D., of Johns Hopkins, has been appointed editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Among the very many decisions that Angell has made as *NEJM’s* executive editor, there are a couple we vehemently disagree with, as we have reported. No matter!

Angell is highly qualified, and we hope that what has been billed as an interim appointment, until the Massachusetts Medical Society finds a permanent replacement for its previous editor-in-chief, internist Jerome P. Kassirer, M.D. — who was fired last summer — will, rather, turn into an open-ended appointment for Angell. She says she’s ready to work less, and spend more time smelling the roses. Aren’t we all!

—David R. Zimmerman

###

**Coming Clean:** Phillip Morris has now publicly acknowledged that cigarettes are addictive and cause cancer. A company spokesman said they wanted to clarify matters, and get the whole mess behind them.

So: You can lie direly for forty years, as a business matter, then confess and move merrily onward when business dictates; Phillip Morris appears not to fear an accounting of its lies.

What interests us more are the motives of people, like cigarette spokesman Leonard Zahn (*PROBE*, April), who spread these lies through the years. Was it simple greed — or need for a job? Or denial, by people who were addicted to nicotine?

We hope some cigarette hucksters will write memoirs that will clarify their roles and reasons — for everyone’s edification.

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**Mum’s the Word:** We’ve again asked both the American Academy of Dermatology and Schering-Plough Consumer Products to tell us the terms of the skin docs’ endorsement of the company’s *Coppertone™* sunscreens. Both, again, declined to say.

Since the Academy is a trade organization, not a health charity like many cause related marketing partners, their tax forms are shielded. So we’ve found no way — yet — to get this information.

###

**Correction:** The American Communist lawyer who allegedly led a Russian spy cell in Washington, D.C., during World War II was John Abt, not Apt, as we erroneously spelled his name in September.

Also, we reported in October that Eli Lilly’s common stock rose to the high 90’s late last year. The actual high was 97 3/4, on March 5, of this year. After Lilly’s raloxifene scam was exposed, the price fell to 60 9/16 in August.

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**PROBE**

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The Smithsonian Institution, America's venerable national museum, has caved in — with nary a whimper — to pressure from PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) and other animal rights activists. Museum officials cancelled a program on pâté de foie gras, scheduled for late in September under the auspices of the Smithsonian Associates, a privately funded support group.

The scheduled speaker was poultryman and gourmet Michael A. Ginor. His Hudson Valley Foie Gras operation, in Ferndale, N.Y., is the largest U.S. producer of the culinary delicacy. Foie gras hors d'oeuvres were to be served, along with a glass of wine.

PETA charges that the force-feeding of geese and ducks to produce their sought-after fatty livers tortures the birds. Ginor says scientific studies show this is not so: They eat eagerly, he says.

PETA wrote Smithsonian Associates director Mara Mayor, demanding the event be cancelled. PETA also prompted stage greats Sir John Gielgud, in London, and Beatrice Arthur, in the U.S., to urge the Smithsonian to stop the event.

**Program is Cancelled**

The Smithsonian complied. Mayor wrote Sir John saying, "We have concluded that it is in the best interest of all involved not to hold the program." A Smithsonian spokesman told the New York Times they were worried "something untoward" might happen.

Ginor told PROBE by phone from Los Angeles, where he was touring to promote his new book, *Foie Gras: A Passion* (New York: Wiley) that the Smithsonian did not consult him before cancelling the event. He said they told Wiley that they were facing political pressure from animal rights activists. Ginor said it was his impression that the animal rightsers had threatened a demonstration that would make people uncomfortable.

Wiley's director of corporate communications, Susan Stilka, who took Mayor's call from Smithsonian Associates, says the museum rep told her they were concerned for the "comfort and safety" of guests at the event. She said Mayor told her that after the liver pâté event was publicized, a spate of new reservations came in — and the museum's associates feared these participants might shift the evening's focus from food and drink to politics and animal rights. When the original registrants were told this, Stilka was told, they withdrew their reservations — and the event was cancelled.

**Threats Closely Held**

Mara Mayor did not return a call from PROBE.

The letters from the two aging thespians, clearly, did not make the Smithsonian back down. But Smithsonian's director of communications, David Umansky, refused to reveal the contents of other letters or phone calls from animal rightsers.

"We're not going to release them," he told PROBE, defensively. "We don't want to give them any credit."

Umansky declined to discuss whether the FBI was looking into the threats. Reminded that there are severe legal penalties under the 1992 Federal Animal Enterprise Protection Act for individuals who cause harm to scientists or damage animal research facilities — of which the Smithsonian is one — Umansky said the Smithsonian Associates is a private organization.

Its offices are in the Smithsonian.

"To us," Umansky said, "it was one program out of hundreds, or thousands." Rather than disclose any fresh information, he added: "We want to get past it."

Ginor, in California, said his book had already sold out its first printing, before publication, and has won a cookbook award in Europe. But he criticized the Smithsonian for bowing

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**Scientist Leads Art Museum’s Defense**

A physicist, Alan J. Friedman, Ph.D., is point man for New York City’s cultural institutions as they defend the Brooklyn Museum of Art (BMA) against attacks and defunding by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Given today’s political climate, the arts and the sciences clearly have concerns in common.

The mayor is mad because BMA is showing a painting of the Virgin Mary decorated with elephant dung — which Giuliani claims is Catholic bashing. (The artist denies such intent.) Lawsuits and countersuits have been filed, amidst much media commotion; BMA’s attendance is up.

The role of its defender fell to scientist Friedman, who is director of the New York Hall of Science, the city’s science museum, in Queens. He has grasped the nettle.

"Friedman is currently chief of the city’s Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), made up of the heads of private institutions in city-owned buildings or on city land; his museum and the BMA are among the three dozen members."

The productivity of New York’s private/public partnership in cultural, scientific, and educational matters, Friedman says, accounts for the city’s preeminent role in these areas.

Friedman wrote the mayor, for CIG, saying the threat to defund BMA has "a chilling effect on all cultural institutions’ ability to exercise their professional judgment and take the risks inherent in experimentation.”

"There’s going to be something in everything that offends somebody," Friedman told PROBE. “The best way” to maintain the productive relationship between private museums and public funders “is to look at the total of what the institution does” — not at a single painting. ■
Politics...

continued from page 1

noted that he retains his PHS rank of assistant surgeon general.

Fenley said the injury control center’s research is continuing. But Koplan did not replace Rosenberg by promoting from within it. The Center’s new chief, acting director, family practitioner Stephen B. Thacker, M.D. Thacker is from another CDC center, and appears to have little experience in gun violence studies.

Riflemen Upset

The CDC Injury Control Center and CDC’s research into the causes and prevention of gun violence have been strongly opposed by the National Rifle Association (NRA) and Senate Republicans.

In 1995, Congress gutted the program by cutting the center’s budget by $2.6 million, the precise amount CDC had requested to continue its research on gun-related injuries. Congress ordered CDC to sharply curtail, if not absolutely halt, its work on gun deaths and wounds. Rosenberg was the point man for this research effort.

The senators who attacked the CDC gun study program, which — in language crafted by the NRA — they accused of “enthusiasm to promote a political agenda against gun ownership” — were nine Republicans, including Bob Dole (Kansas), Trent Lott (Mississippi), Christopher Bond (Missouri), Ted Stevens (Alaska), and Lauch Faircloth (North Carolina). They were joined by one Democrat, Max Baucus (Montana).

Action ‘Punitive’ — Satcher

The NRA’s primary goal, articulated through these senators, was simply to abolish Rosenberg’s Injury Prevention and Control Center. It was a “punitive” action, Satcher told PROBE.

Budget Is $1 Million or Less

Spokeswoman Fenley said she had no knowledge of this alleged agenda, and referred the question to Koplan, her boss.

He did not return PROBE’s call for comment. His spokesman, Kent Taylor, said Koplan was “out of the office,” and “just unavailable. So,” he continued, “I’m sorry we won’t be able to help you on that.”

Some colleagues in the tiny community of gun injury researchers — who are enraged by Rosenberg’s firing — say the precise machinations remain murky, perhaps even to Rosenberg. Injury prevention specialist David Hemenway, Ph.D., an economist at the Harvard School of Public Health, told PROBE by phone from Boston:

“...
What CDC Is Doing Now

Each time children are massacred in school or church, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) dispatches one (or more) of its expert epidemiologic investigators to search for causes, and report critical findings back to the federal government. Right?

No. Dead wrong! This is not happening.

One reason, explains CDC spokeswoman Mary Ann Fenley, who represents the Atlanta agency’s National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC), is that, by law, the federal epidemiologists can enter a case only at the request of state authorities. So far, Fenley said, only Colorado has asked, although local officials there are resisting for fear that a CDC investigator might further traumatize Columbine high school’s students.

Another reason for CDC’s absence from the scene, of course, is that Congress has told the agency to stay away from guns.

A few studies on what CDC calls “youth violence” — in which guns are responsible for three-fourths of the deaths — are ongoing. And to the extent they are able, Fenley indicated, CDC perseveres.

Along with the federal Departments of Education and Justice, NCIPC has been studying “school-associated violent deaths” since 1992, based on government and news reports. Preliminary findings were published in JAMA on June 12, 1996; a brief update was issued last August. A fuller report will be released later this autumn, CDC says. But data collection for this study ended after the 1997-98 school year. So the “multiple victim events,” as CDC calls them, in Conyers, Georgia, Notus, Idaho, and Littleton, Colorado (Columbine), won’t be included.

These data already are known, CDC says:

- There were 173 fatal violence incidents in schools between 1994 and 1998, and this was fewer than in previous years. Most resulted from one-on-one fights over drugs, a jacket, a girl friend, or other personal issues.
- Most were single killings with guns.
- The number of “multiple victim” deaths is rapidly rising, from one per year in the early ’90s, to five such deaths per year from 1995 to 1998. The rate, obviously, is much higher since then.

The present study’s format excludes off-campus shootings at religious institutions.

The multiple victim events appear to be a new phenomenon, Fenley said. But CDC is hesitant to say, just yet, that a new “pattern” is emerging. She acknowledged, however, that Columbine and similar shootings “might be sentinel events” for which new kinds of studies, leading to different preventive measures, may be needed.

The CDC has noted a change in demographics, Fenley said: The one-on-one killings that characterized the earlier part of the decade, and which are falling in number, tended to occur in urban, “inner city” — meaning of course black or Hispanic — neighborhoods. The more recent multiple victim killings are taking place in suburban and rural areas, and all perpetrators and most victims are white. [Most of these events have occurred in the South and West.]

At this point, Fenley said, most of the CDC violence center’s effort is on studying and preventing the one-on-one violence of an earlier era. No epidemiological study has thus far been announced to study or figure out how to prevent the new, multiple victim events that have stunned the nation. ■

Politics...

continued from previous page

Hemenway, who has spoken to Rosenberg since then, added:

“I thought he was very good. He was headed in the right direction.” This means, the Harvard researcher added, that Rosenberg was trying to build a national firearms injury surveillance system; this is a scientific sine qua non, he said, for any systematic effort to find and test methods to lower the gun toll. (See story, p. 6).

Presently, as the bullets fly in high schools, churches, and commercial buildings across the country, CDC’s remaining budget, for the limited research and analysis allowed by Congress, is about $1 million annually, according to CDC’s Mary Ann Fenley.

A researcher who is outside of government, Roseanna Ander of the Joyce Foundation, in Chicago — which supports some of the defunded CDC studies — says the federal input now is as low as half a million dollars per annum.

Thus, at a time when a new kind of gun violence, aimed mostly at kids, has horrified Americans, their government is moving to stop the little bit of research that it still conducts on understanding the problem. A victory by George W. Bush next year may completely wipe out these studies. ■

Bush Called Artful Dodger

When deranged killer Larry Ashbrook shot down seven of Texas governor George W. Bush’s constituents at a Fort Worth church complex, Bush blamed “a wave of evil,” and said the antidote is “more love in society.”

He proposed stepped-up prosecution of gun crimes — but not tightened gun control.

Bush’s local newspaper, the Austin American-Statesman, wasn’t buying, however:

In gun-loving Texas, Bush is politically wise to target criminals instead of guns. But with each new tragedy and each new outrage perpetrated by a killer with a gun, it becomes harder to ignore the fact that the problem is the proliferation of and easy access to guns . . . . Tougher prosecution would not have saved one life at the [Wedgwood] church, but restricting handguns well may have (Sept. 25).

The Austin paper noted that Bush’s proposals are designed to look like substance when his aim, in fact, is not to alienate gun owners.
Aggregate Data Is Urgently Sought

Significant amounts of research are needed — urgently — to find and test new methods to lower gun injuries and deaths. This is the mantra of researchers in this tiny area of public health medicine.

Four years ago, at the behest of the National Rifle Association, Congress cut off CDC's funding for these studies. Several foundations have since stepped in with some interim funding to keep the work going. The largest current donor, researchers say, is the Joyce Foundation, in Chicago, which, according to one estimate, provides 70% of the current financing for gun injury research. Others include: the David and Lucile Packard Foundation in California, Irene Diamond fund in New York, and the Soros Center on Crime, Communication, and Culture, also in New York.

This is a "teensy-tinsey amount," complains health policy expert Roseanna Ander, M.S., who directs the Joyce fund's gun program. "It's a drop in the bucket!"

She and economist David Hemenway, Ph.D., at the Harvard School of Public Health, who helps distribute the Joyce grants to researchers, say they are trying to show that these studies can be productive, and want to coax and shame the Fed to return to the table (see story below).

Gun deaths are second only to auto deaths in the U.S., and Ander, Hemenway and others point to the network of health, safety, and automotive agencies that minutely study car crashes. They look for possible interventions — such as seat belts, speeding laws, car building improvements — and then assess the efficacy of these interventions in order to help policy-makers decide whether to keep or discard them.

Comparable surveillance of gun injuries and deaths is the only way to achieve comparable reductions, they say. But these data simply are not being collected, collated, or analyzed at this time; Hemenway says:

"We need aggregate data!"

This is basic research, they note. It's the Fed's responsibility.

"It's much more appropriate for the government to fund basic research," Ander told PROBE by phone, "rather than foundations."

How much would this cost? Four million dollars a year, according to one research advocacy group's estimate.

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Preliminary Gun Findings Revealed

Several weapons-related injury studies, defunded by CDC, continue to limp forward. Some are supported by the Joyce Foundation of Chicago, and Harvard’s School of Public Health, in Boston. Harvard has released some preliminary findings:

# # #

**New York City Dept. of Health's Weapons-Related Injury Surveillance System:**
- The rise and fall of gunshot injuries in the '90s followed the contagion model: Gun violence in one neighborhood spread to bordering neighborhoods. But: There was no similar contagion effect for knife injuries.
- Almost half of all homicides (47%) by intimate partners were committed with guns; 42% of these shooters then killed themselves. But among non-gun intimate homicides, only 15% of killers killed themselves.
# # #

**Los Angeles County Dept. of Health Services**
- Gang-related homicides are down to 1980 levels, and have dropped from 40% to 30% of all homicides.
- It costs $25,000 to care for one non-fatal gunshot wound in a trauma center.
# # #

**Massachusetts Weapons-Related Injury Surveillance System (WRISS)**
This system collects information on people dying in or treated by hospital emergency rooms for gunshot wounds and violence-related sharp instrument injuries. It found:
- Most victims are young; 75% of people with gun injuries in Boston in one recent year were 25 or younger.
- The “Boston miracle” — a sharp decrease in gun violence in the mid-'90s during a major anti-violence initiative — has been matched in other violence-prone parts of the commonwealth that lacked such an initiative.
- Semi-automatic pistols are replacing revolvers and long guns as the weapons of choice in shootings.
# # #

**Medical College of Wisconsin Firearm Injury Surveillance System**
This project was one of the first to link firearm fatality reports from medical examiners, police, and crime labs. It has found:
- Five specific makes of gun accounted for almost half of all gun deaths in Milwaukee. But they amounted to only 6% of guns turned in in a buy-back program — which thus did not rid the streets of the most dangerous guns.
- The Clinton Crime Bill of 1994 listed 19 specific types of weapons. Before the bill passed, these guns still were involved in 9% of Milwaukee homicides. After the bill passed, these guns were involved in 9% of such killings. So the law has not been adequately enforced — or is ineffective.

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Maine Medical Center
This trauma center has tied together data from emergency services and hospitals throughout the state. They've found:
- In 20% of gunshot wounds, the time between the ambulance call and the patient's arrival at a hospital exceeds 60 minutes, the so-called "golden hour" for survival.

# # #

These findings, the Harvard researchers say, indicate the promise of a national firearms injury surveillance for informing a rational gun policy. To achieve this, they urge:
- Advocacy for external-cause-of-injury coding in hospitals in the 27 states that lack it.
- Introduction of integrated surveillance systems in cities and states that lack them.
- Encouragement of more refinement, use, sharing, and dissemination of this data.

Most important, Hemenway and his associates add:
"The federal government [should be encouraged] to assume its rightful role as the national coordinator of the effort to create a unified, comparable, and consistent national firearms injury reporting system."

# # #

That, of course, is precisely what the militias, the National Rifle Association, and their congressional supporters don't want! — D.R.Z.
PROBE Opinion: Why Guns Matter

The national debate about guns and gun control is not about hunting, the Second Amendment, or even protecting one's self and family from thugs. It's mostly about power — individuals' personal power — and the deteriorating relationship between many, mostly white, American men and a governmental authority they're being taught to hate.

Intellectuals, artists, and members of minority groups command little social or political power. Historically, they've looked to government and civil society for protection, freedom, and other basic rights. The U.S. has been slow to uphold these constitutional rights — which has necessitated prodding by the Civil, Feminist, and Gay Rights movements.

They are succeeding to a remarkable extent!

Democratic Authority Irks Some

Now, federal and even states' authority is cloaked in equal rights — for women, blacks, homosexuals. This is an equality that many white male Americans hate, and won't accept. They've lost their historical and social primacy.

 Needless to say, racism and homophobia are potent, and only slightly concealed elements of gun-owners' rage.

Individually-owned guns even things up. Guns are extensions of gun-owners' self-images, part of their personae.

They may never need to use their guns; simply possessing them expresses their power. On the other hand, guns are seductive — they have a tendency to go off in owners' hands in moments of physical and emotional stress — and they seem to be particularly enticing to "losers," men who have what is technically called low self-esteem.

GOP Speaks for Gun Owners

The political expression of these feelings of alienation, fear, and anger is embodied by the populist sector of the Republican party. To a significant extent, the GOP presently exists to fight gun control and gun research. That's why, at a time when millions of Americans turn to their government, the source of most research funding, for answers on how to stop the slaughter of school kids, the Republicans are totally committed to killing any possible threat to the I-and-my-gun persona. They'd rather take the risk of seeing their children — or ours — shot down in schools, than take any real step to staunch the blood flow.

That's why gun control, and even research that might lead to greater gun control, is strictly taboo. It's perceived as a personal threat to these many Americans.

Civil society may in part be a myth. But it's a myth based on law, and on trust in the commonwealth. Gun owners' macho myth is based on frontier fiction. It is anti-social. It is a threat to our safety — and to civil society.

We are going in a very dangerous direction. — D.R.Z.

Anthropologist: The Right-wingers Are Wed to Guns

America's gun nuts aren't all hillbillies.

Quite the contrary, reports a Floridian anthropologist, Keith Akins, Ph.D. He recently spent three years hanging in with militias, skinheads, and Ku Klux Klanners in Florida to document who is in the Militia Movement and what they are up to.

"I hated what these people stood for, but as I got to know them on a personal level, I found most to be hardworking and decent," Akins told Explore, the University of Florida's research magazine (Fall, '99). "They simply got caught up in cultural changes that were beyond their ability to understand, and in a desperate search for answers, bought into the [militia] movement's conspiracy theories."

Gun ownership and a taste for violence are nevertheless key militia traits:

"I found that nearly everyone in the militia groups owns multiple firearms; at least one member owns automatic assault weapons; and the amount of explosives each organization has access to is far beyond what most people could imagine. "They also have a lot more ties to violent groups in Europe and

Disclosure

We own a gun. — D.R.Z.

Australia than most people think, using the Internet to exchange information about how to make weapons and manufacture explosives."

Akins has the proper credentials to mix with the militia men: He is a white, deeply religious Southern Baptist. He has military experience and firearms skills, and is a disabled veteran. He blended in, even though — in keeping with anthropologists' current professional rules — he told his subjects he had come to them for research purposes. Nonetheless, some are not happy about his findings, Akins told PROBE by phone.

Ideological Octopus Seen

The glue that holds the Militia Movement together, according to Akins, is a conspiracy theory — an "ideological octopus" he calls it — "each tentacle [of which] represents a specific concern, such as firearm ownership, abortion, or prayer in public schools."

Problems in these areas are blamed on the U.S. government and the United Nations, the so-called "New World Order" [which is a thinly-veiled reference to Jewish influences and Jews]. Akins says:

Economic changes are the result of an international banking conspiracy . . . . Financial and military support for Israel is redistributed to America's enemies.

continued on following page

November 1999
Anthropologist...
continued from previous page

Environmental laws limit the free and 'wise' use of America's resources, and create dependency on international corporations. Abortion is government-funded population control. United Nations peacekeeping operations subvert the U.S. military by incorporating them into a New World Order police force. Guns are confiscated so citizens cannot protect themselves.

Many Americans hold similar views, Akins says. Most do not join militias. The difference that tips people into militias, he writes, is fundamentalism. "The militia movement," he says, "can be seen as just another example of the rising tide of fundamentalism that has swept the world in the last two decades."

The millennial moment contributes to their angst. Militia members may be ignorant, but they're not dumb. Akins found that only ten percent of Florida militia men were high school dropouts; nationally, 27% of the population dropped out of school. Rather, he found:

"There are faculty members, business owners, corporate executives, lawyers, and doctors," among them, "mingled with rednecks, the unemployed, and menial laborers."

Most members are active in their local churches; some are local politicians. Nearly all are married with children.

To signal his affinity with his subjects, Akins has a Confederate flag and the Latin words Odi et Amo — Hate and Love — tattooed on his arm. He says he plans one day to have them removed.

Meanwhile, the scientist and skilled marksman says, he's taking "appropriate precautions" in case some of his thesis subjects feel betrayed by his findings. He's now teaching at the University of North Florida, in Jacksonville.

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