

Common Sense Approach to School Violence

*“In any war, the first casualty is common sense, and the second is free and open discussion.” –****James Reston****.*

Recent events remind us that throughout our history, we have routinely experienced mass killings. These heinous crimes are committed most frequently by young males, often, with a mental sickness. Of course, if the crime is committed with a gun, the gun becomes the focus. In the case of schools, the police response and type of school security also come under scrutiny.

The modern-day reaction always includes the catchy term, “Common Sense Gun Laws”. This is a neutral term that is designed to elicit agreement across the board. After all, who would not want “common sense” gun laws. The problem is, who gets to define *common sense”?*

It is my belief at Tripwire that along with the commonsense gun laws, there should also be common sense legislation giving police the legal “tool kit” to prevent these shootings. As we focus on the politics surrounding the gun rights debate, I believe we are missing an opportunity to establish a prevention process which would combine the efforts and enhanced abilities of both the police and trained school administrations.

After the Terror attacks at the Pentagon and World Trade Center in 2001, federal agencies, specifically the FBI, were given a mandate to “prevent” the next terror attack. Today we hear a similar cry of “*Never Again*”. National Security Agencies were redesigned and provided legal tools such as The Patriot Act to support the “prevention” mission. A balance was struck between the privacy rights of citizens and looming terror threats. Is it time to provide police departments with a similar construct? In the same counterterrorism approach, do we need to redesign local police, specifically School Resource Officers, with a tactical response capability and a local version of a “Patriot Act”. Is it time to establish a crisis prevention approach, and not just a crisis response approach?

Common Sense can mean many things. Maybe we already have the commonsense approach. We designed it after 9/11, the FBI uses it, and it has worked for 21 years.

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