

# Mass Shootings: The Military-Entertainment Complex's Culture of Violence Turns Deadly

By [John W. Whitehead](#)

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*This [latest mass shooting](#) in Las Vegas that left more than 50 people dead and more than 500 injured is as obscure as they come: a 64-year-old retiree with no apparent criminal history, no military training, and no obvious axe to grind opens fire on a country music concert crowd from a hotel room 32 floors up using a semi-automatic gun that may have been rigged to fire up to 700 rounds a minute, then kills himself.*

We're left with more questions than answers, none of them a flattering reflection of the nation's values, political priorities, or the manner in which the military-industrial complex continues to dominate, dictate and shape almost every aspect of our lives.

For starters, why do these [mass shootings keep happening](#)? Mass shootings have taken place at churches, in nightclubs, on college campuses, on military bases, in [elementary schools](#), in government offices, and at concerts. This shooting is [the deadliest to date](#).

What is it about America that makes violence our nation's calling card?

Is it because [America is a gun culture](#)?

Is it because guns are so readily available? After all, the U.S. is home to [more firearms than adults](#). Curiously enough, the [majority of gun-related deaths in the U.S. are suicides](#), not homicides.

Is it because [entertainment violence is the hottest selling ticket at the box office](#)?

Is it because the government continues to whet the nation's appetite for violence and war through paid propaganda programs (seeded throughout sports entertainment, Hollywood blockbusters and video games)—what professor **Roger Stahl** refers to as "[militainment](#)"—that glorify the military and serve as recruiting tools for America's expanding military empire?

Is it because the United States is the [number one consumer, exporter and perpetrator of violence and violent weapons](#) in the world? America [spends more money on war](#) than other countries. America polices the globe, with [800 military bases and troops stationed in 160 countries](#). And the war hawks have turned the American homeland into a quasi-battlefield with military gear, weapons and tactics. In turn, domestic police forces have become roving extensions of the military—a standing army.

Or is the [Second Amendment to blame](#), as many continue to suggest? Would there be fewer

mass shootings if [tighter gun control laws](#) were enacted?

Then again, could it be, as some have speculated, that these shootings are all part of an elaborate plan to incite fear and chaos, heighten national tensions and shift us that much closer to a complete lockdown? After all, the military and our militarized police forces have been [predicting and preparing for exactly this kind of scenario](#) for years now.

Perhaps there's no single one factor to blame for this gun violence. However, there is a common denominator, and that is a war-drenched, violence-imbued, profit-driven military industrial complex that has invaded almost every aspect of our lives.

Ask yourself: Who are these shooters modelling themselves after? Where are they finding the inspiration for their weaponry and tactics? Whose stance and techniques are they mirroring?

In almost every instance, you can connect the dots back to the military.

We are a military culture.

We have been a nation at war for most of our existence.

We are a nation that makes a living from killing through defense contracts, weapons manufacturing and endless wars.

In order to sustain the nation's appetite for war over the long haul in spite of the costs of war in lives lost and dollars spent—and little else to show for it—the military has had to work overtime to churn out pro-war, pro-military propaganda. It's exactly what President Eisenhower warned against (“the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex”) in his [1961 farewell address](#).

We didn't listen then and we're still not listening now.

All the while, the government's war propaganda machine has grown more sophisticated and entrenched in American culture.

All of the military equipment [featured in blockbuster movies such as X-Men and Transformers](#) is provided—at taxpayer expense—in exchange for carefully placed promotional spots aimed at indoctrinating the American populace into believing that patriotism means throwing their support behind the military wholeheartedly and unquestioningly.

Even [reality TV shows have gotten in on the gig](#).

It's estimated that [U.S. military intelligence agencies \(including the NSA\) have influenced over 1,800 movies and TV shows](#).

And then there are the growing number of video games, a number of which are engineered by or created for the military, which have accustomed players to interactive war play through military simulations and first-person shooter scenarios.

This is how you acclimate a population to war.

This is how you cultivate loyalty to a war machine.

Not satisfied with peddling its war propaganda through Hollywood, reality TV shows and embedded journalists whose reports came across as glorified promotional ads for the military, the Pentagon turned to sports to further advance its agenda, “[tying the symbols of sports with the symbols of war.](#)”

The military has been [firmly entrenched in the nation’s sports spectacles ever since.](#)

Remember, just before this Vegas shooting gave the media, the politicians and the easily distracted public something new to obsess over, the headlines were dominated by President Trump’s feud with the NFL over players kneeling during the national anthem.

That, too, was yet another example of how much the military entertainment complex—which [paid \\$53 million of taxpayer money between 2012 and 2015 to pro sports teams for military tributes](#)—has infiltrated American culture.

Are you starting to get the picture now?

When you talk about the Las Vegas mass shooting, you’re not dealing with a single shooter scenario. Rather, you’re dealing with a sophisticated, far-reaching war machine that has woven itself into the very fabric of this nation.

You want to stop the gun violence?

Stop the worship of violence that permeates our culture.

Stop glorifying the military industrial complex with flyovers and salutes during sports spectacles.

Stop acting as if there is anything patriotic about military exercises and occupations that bomb hospitals and schools.

Stop treating guns and war as entertainment fodder in movies, music, video games, toys, amusement parks, reality TV and more.

Stop distribution weapons of war to the local police and turning them into extensions of the military—weapons that have no business being anywhere but on a battlefield.

Most of all, as I point out in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#), stop falling for the military industrial complex’s psychological war games.

*Constitutional attorney and author **John W. Whitehead** is founder and president of [The Rutherford Institute](#). His new book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) (SelectBooks, 2015) is available online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Whitehead can be contacted at [johnw@rutherford.org](mailto:johnw@rutherford.org).*

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