Prof. Clifford Kiracofe

Campus Shootings: The Larger Picture

On April 21, host Harley Schlanger of "The LaRouche Show," an Internet radio program, interviewed Prof. Clifford Kiracofe, a former staff member in the U.S. Senate and currently a professor of political science at Virginia universities. Here is an excerpt of the discussion, pertaining to the Virginia Tech shootings of April 16. The LaRouche Show airs Saturdays at 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time at www.larouchepub.com.

Schlanger: You mentioned that you had attended a conference a week or so before the Virginia Tech shooting, on the question of violence.

Kiracofe: That's one reason why this event came as such a shock. On April 7, I was at a law-enforcement workshop down in Roanoke, Va., and we were going through various aspects of how there's been a rise, as you may know, in violent crime across the United States. It had gone down in the 1990s, but the Bush Administration and the politicians aren't going to tell you, but the police and law-enforcement folks will, that there's been a general rise in violent crimes, robberies, and also murders in the last several years. So nationwide, there's a rise in violent crime.

Our workshop looked at that issue in general. We looked at the problem of so-called youth gangs, particularly the Hispanic gangs that originated in Los Angeles. Now, they're permeating the entire country, including here in the Virginia countryside, the so-called *maras* from El Salvador, or the Mexicans, and all. We have a nationwide phenomenon of gang violence and narcotics abuse. I think the public has been so fixed, quite rightly, on the Iraq disaster, that we tend to forget, here at home, this rise nationwide in violence.

Also we worked on the theme of school violence, from the elementary school level, the middle school level, the high school level, and the college and university level. There's been quite a high, completely unacceptable, level of school violence, defined as all those different grades, in the United States as well in the recent years.

Schlanger: And then, on top of that, within a week or so, you had the shooting at Virginia Tech.

Kiracofe: The thing that was most interesting, that kind of shocked me the most, was when, in our workshops, we went through professional law-enforcement assessments of various former school-shooter events. You may recall the Colum-

bine event, and Paducah, Ky.; there's a whole list of these school-shooter events.

Now, our instructors, briefers, were putting it in the context that our children are threatened in school, two ways: By our own domestic school-shooters, like Mr. Cho [Seung-Hui] at Tech, but also by international terrorism. Schools are a target of terrorism, like Beslan in Russia, for example. So, law-enforcement researchers around the world have pooled their resources, with the view of researching school violence, either through aberrant pathological/psychological cases, like we had with Mr. Cho, or, organized terrorist violence that wishes to use children as hostages, or murder teachers and children. So the issue of homeland security in our country has to be expanded a bit, I think, and a bit more concentration placed on security of school systems.

Schlanger: You mentioned the cases of Paducah and Columbine. There's another similar case in Erfurt, Germany, where I think 16 students were killed by a shooter, and there's something in common in those three cases, with the case at Virginia Tech, which unfortunately is generally being not just ignored, but blacked out of the press. And that is the role of video games, the addiction to or obsession with violent video games. We have on our website, the text of a *Washington Post* online article, which mentioned that several of Cho's friends said that he had been obsessed with the game "Counter-Strike," which is a point-and-shoot video game, in which a Glock 9 automatic is one of the weapons of choice. That was taken off the *Post* website, never appeared again. And when an attorney called them, to ask them why, they said, it "wasn't important to the story."

At your workshop, was there discussion of the games?
Kiracofe: Oh, absolutely. As a political scientist, I'm studying not only foreign affairs, but also domestic politics. I'm interested in the criminal justice issues, and obviously school security and school safety ties into the criminal justice system.

Now, law enforcement, as well as professional forensic psychologists and others know, and have the evidence that, video games do create the mental impairment, and do inspire, and also deform, children's judgment. So, the video-game issue was very prominent in the briefings, as we were working through various cases. We were looking through different cases, Paducah; Springfield, Ore., and others, linking to this video-game issue. And also violent movies, like so-called "Matrix," affected, it is said, the Columbine kids, as to the way they dressed and styled themselves. It's also said that Cho was affected by a violent South Korean film and imitated some imagery in the film.

Schlanger: We also saw him in his rambling videotape, pay homage to, and identify with, the shooters at Columbine.
Kiracofe: Yes, that was particularly stunning, because, as I said, I took this workshop on April 7, and a week or so later, we have this situation down at Tech. And Cho, if you look

carefully, there are also elements, of course, that we could say are cultic, or Satanic, or unusual, or strange: his use of numbers, the number 88; his use of colors, the color red, as he was writing things; his black cross with two black eyes in front of it, surrounded by a red heart. I mean, he's obviously into some sort of visual code, some cultic code—I'm not sure anybody's decoded it yet, but I'm sure law enforcement's going to be on it very carefully.

But at any rate, the issue of video games I think is central. A fellow by the name of David Grossman, a retired military man in the United States, works closely with law enforcement. He has a website himself, and I was just refreshing my mind with some of these concepts the other night, because David Grossman was pointed out in one of our workshops as one of the key experts on this video-game/school violence thing. [See *EIR,* April 27, 2007, for a speech by, and interview with Colonel Grossman.]

The problem with the video games, is, they do induce skills in point and shoot. Actually, video games are used by law enforcement and by the military for combat training. So what these things amount to, for professional use, is combatting crime. Now, for the young people, it's basically creating mass murderers.

Schlanger: Are you at all surprised by the fact that the *Washington Post,* which had reporters who had this story, decided to cover it up?
Kiracofe: Not at all. I think it's a nationwide trend, in the media. Where was the media when we were going into the Iraq War? Nowhere. They were cheerleading the President. So, I think the news media have completely failed, the major media, the corporate media, have completely failed the citizens of this republic. And in this case, I was doing a search for the newspaper coverage of this tragic event down at Tech, and if you try to punch in "Cho" and "video games," you get very, very few hits. There are very, very few articles that went into the issue of the video games and the video-game culture. And also the fact that, even some of his fellow South Korean schoolmates, were quoted saying: Yeah, when he was in high school in Northern Virginia, he was addicted to these things, particularly Counter-Strike, but others, too.

That was stripped out of the news reports I saw. I saw a law-enforcement official in San Bernardino, I believe it was, quoted, and I saw a few college counseling service workers quoted, with respect to video games. But there are professionals all over the country that could be giving quotes on this, but they seem to be completely eliminated from the national discussion at the moment.

Schlanger: There was a psychiatrist on CNN last night who mentioned it, and they didn't go back to her.
Kiracofe: It's inconceivable to me, that in a tragedy like this, *or* in the other tragedies, that we're not getting to the bottom of this problem. . . .