



In the wake of the tragic shooting deaths at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., last month, the National Rifle Association proposed that the best way to protect schoolchildren was to place a guard — a “good guy with a gun” — in every school, part of a so-called National School Shield Emergency Response Program.

Indeed, the N.R.A.’s solution to the expansion of gun violence in America has been generally to advocate for the more widespread deployment and carrying of guns.

I recently visited some Latin American countries that mesh with the N.R.A.’s vision of the promised land, where guards with guns grace every office lobby, storefront, A.T.M., restaurant and gas station. It has not made those countries safer or saner.

Despite the ubiquitous presence of “good guys” with guns, countries like Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Colombia and Venezuela have some of the highest homicide rates in the world.

“A society that is relying on guys with guns to stop violence is a sign of a society where institutions have broken down,” said Rebecca Peters, former director of the International Action Network on Small Arms. “It’s shocking to hear anyone in the United States considering a solution that would make it seem more like Colombia.”

As guns proliferate, legally and illegally, innocent people often seem more terrorized than protected.

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