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Wave of a troubled juvenile future

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In the violent wake of the recent slaughter in Springfield, Ore., America faces a future wave of juvenile terrorism from Internet-self-trained, Timothy McVeigh-determined and Unabomber-technically-savvy adolescents intent on getting even with a society they deem responsible for their low self-esteem.

Indeed, within a week of 15-year-old Kip Kinkel's armed attack on his high-school classmates, the "fad" had caught on nationwide as pre-pubescent terrorists had taken their schools hostage. In small, rural McLouth, Kan., classes were canceled at the town's only school after threats by a middle student to bring a gun to class. In Hurricane, W.Va., a fifth-grader threatened to kill his assistant principal. The result: the elementary school children stayed home.

And finally, on Long Island, juvenile cyberterrorism has become a reality. Using e-mail, a teen-ager threatened to blow up his school and kill teachers and students. Fortunately, the student was arrested by the police and charged with harassment.

* Easy access to weapons in their own homes and busy parents willing to delegate discipline to forensic psychologists.

* Morbid fascination with guns and blowing things up, facility with Internet research and easy access to a large tool shed.

Remember that these were the only ingredients that Kip Kinkel needed to build his lethal and sophisticated arsenal of bombs that was awaiting the Oregon police when they discovered the dead bodies of his parents. Apparently, this kid intended to take out not only his school but also a sizable part of the community.

Timothy McVeigh, who blew up the federal building in Oklahoma City, received his demolition training from several years of exposure to it in the military. In stark contrast, young Kinkel became a self-made explosives expert from merely having a deft hand on his PC's "mouse" and a modicum of intelligence. Also consider the ingenious teen-age hackers who recently penetrated the cyberwall of the Pentagon's unclassified information systems.

Other elements in the profile of a teen terrorist include:

* Self-perception of being a social pariah and the object of derision and schoolyard jokes, especially in the context of rejection by the opposite sex.

* A craving for violent revenge against classmates.

The specter of juvenile terrorism presents a leadership crisis of the first order for a president fixated on reducing teen smoking rather than the high probability that in the coming millennium hundreds of children will be closely monitored under the FBI's terrorist watch. Perilously, this generation is giving

birth to an army of future Timothy McVeighs and Unabombers - a veritable local, state and national security threat - while President Clinton treats this volatile problem with political rhetoric. To be sure, Congress' 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act, which exhorted states to make laws requiring the expulsion for students bringing guns to school, falls short too.

Nothing less than voluntary school prayer and fundamental changes in parental child-rearing, schoolhouse discipline and the content of television and the Internet will hold out any hope of stemming the rising tide of juvenile-induced terrorism and homicide.

Otherwise, here are some of the serious but overlooked consequences of this violent juvenile trend:

* The job of the Secret Service will become even more onerous and stressful. Imagine future presidential visits to elementary schools, where even children could pose a security risk to the president. No longer can the Secret Service consider a 12-year-old's verbal or e-mail threat to harm the president as an innocuous childish prank.

* The Pentagon's worst-case fear of an "electronic Pearl Harbor" that would obliterate America's cyberspace borders might not come from the usual foreign terrorist suspects but rather from a cybercell of arrogant American teen-age hackers. Remember that the juveniles who cracked the Pentagon recently told a U.S. Senate committee that they could bring the entire Internet to a standstill in a matter of hours.

* With or without legal authority, some teachers may, in both inner-city and suburban schools, arm themselves in self-defense, as some schools border on becoming "hostile fire zones."

* Out of fear of violence to their children, many parents may exclusively pursue home-schooling in lieu of traditional education. As a result, some public schools may be forced to close, leaving the affluent with the qualitative edge on educational advancement.

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