

'Beltway Snipers' Trained on Video Games

by Don Phau

Evidence now points to the fact that the accused "Washington Beltway snipers," 18-year-old Lee Malvo and 42-year-old Army veteran John Muhammed, were motivated and trained on popular "point-and-shoot" video games. The two are now being held in Virginia, awaiting trial there and in other states, in the murder last year of 13 people. The random sniper shootings, including the wounding of a 13-year-old student at school, kept people in the Greater Washington area in terror for weeks in the Fall of 2002.

During the murder spree, Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche called for calm as people were being whipped up by press speculation about "al-Qaeda" terrorists, "Middle Eastern men," etc. Both LaRouche and Army Col. David Grossman (ret.) had exposed the role of the multibillion-dollar video-game business in the conditioning and training of the junior and high school shooters, such as those who gunned down over two dozen schoolchildren in Paducah, Kentucky, Jonesboro, Arkansas, and Littleton, Colorado in 1998-99 see *EIR*, March 17, 2000). Grossman, and Helga Zepp-LaRouche on behalf of the Schiller Institute, had called for the banning of these video games.

Hypothesis Proven True

On Oct. 21, 2002, three days before Muhammed and Malvo were arrested, Colonel Grossman, who is a trainer of Army marksmen, circulated an Internet analysis on the shootings which turned out to be highly accurate: "He/they might be video-game player(s), possibly very proficient at the arcade video game 'Silent Scope' or one of the popular video games. Most of the 'new breed' of school killers (Columbine, Paducah, Erfurt, Germany) have been basically 'whacked out' video-game players. It is logical that this is a more 'mature' or 'sophisticated' version of what we have seen before. . . . Probably young, teens or early twenties. There are probably two, just like Columbine and Jonesboro, enabling each other. If we think of this as a 'serial drive-by shooting' in which the two individuals act like a 'crew-served weapon' (like a gunner and assistant gunner on a machine gun) then we can tap WWII data that tells us that most of the time the individuals would not fire, but the crew-served weapons almost always fire." Grossman added, "My recommendation to snipers, military or law enforcement, is always operate as a team (sniper and spotter), thus making it a crew-served weapon and greatly increasing the probability that they will

fire when needed. . . . They could be using a bench rest from the back of a van firing out of a rear vent window."

Muhammed and Malvo allegedly did act like a "crew-served weapon" only instead of using a "bench rest from a back of a van" they were apparently shooting from an opening in the trunk of Chevrolet. Malvo trained on the popular video game "Halo."

The full story of what was behind the action, including whether it was an intelligence operation to create terror, has not come to light. Also raised is the question: Could a similar operation be undertaken? What is known was that Muhammed taught Malvo to shoot using point-and-shoot video games which the Army now uses to train its own recruits. Lee Malvo apparently became a cold killer by playing on commercially available video games.

In an interview, attorney Jack Thompson gave *EIR* more details of the immersion of the "Beltway snipers" in video game play. Thompson represented three girls shot in a Paducah, Kentucky middle school by video gamer Michael Carneal. Thompson noted that NBC reporters had been told by Virginia state investigators that Malvo's ability to kill was first developed by Muhammed on the rifle range. But, when Malvo was unwilling to kill as a sniper, Muhammed switched his training to video games, having him play Microsoft's X-Box game, "Halo." Thompson said the game was "switched to sniper mode to suppress [Malvo's] inhibitions, and it worked." Thompson explained that X-Box, which the U.S. military itself uses to suppress the inhibition of new recruits to kill, had that affect on Malvo. Unfortunately, this shows that the games used by the military for this purpose, have the same effect on civilian teams, because "human beings are human beings. If you give them a virtual training that makes killing consequence-free and even fun, and by killing you 'win the game,' then, of course, it will turn your civilians, for lack of a better term, into little Manchurian candidates, that are armed, ready, willing and able to kill."

Thompson said that his suspicions that the sniper was trained on video games grew, when a Tarot card with the words, "I am GOD," was found at the scene of one of the murders. "The 'I am GOD' proclamation is something you find in video-game chat rooms," he said. "A video game switched to sniper mode is also called 'God mode.' It suggested to me that some young person was involved."

The attorney is planning a lawsuit against the Department of Defense for its role in the joint creation of the Institute for Creative Technology (ICT). The ICT was started with a \$45 million DOD contract in 1999 with the University of California, which brings together Hollywood and the Pentagon with computer experts, to design "virtual war games." Thompson said, "The Institute of Creative Technology's sole purpose is to facilitate the relationship between the entertainment/game industry and the DOD. How can the video-game industry say that their games don't create killers, when they are getting money from the DOD for that very reason?"