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We need heroes to come forward on gun crimes

BY ERNIE SOCHIN



I am angry. (So what else is new?) Once again I read in the morning paper about a little boy on his way home from school or to a candy store being shot dead.

If this were the only time I had seen this I might get angry, but not to the extent that I now am. It seems that this headline greets us almost every day and invariably in one of the urban neighborhoods.

The children are not the actual targets of these killers. They just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, whether it be riding a bike, playing basketball or simply going for a walk. If they happen to be in the way, it is likely they will get shot.

Obviously these killers have no real knowledge of the weapons that they are using. Rather than selectively killing their intended targets, it is easier to just spray the whole damn place hoping that at least one of their bullets will find its target.

The usual cause of these shootings is either drug or gang related — or both. What disturbs me the most is that people absolutely know who committed these crimes but, because of the code of silence in these neighborhoods, no one will dare speak up. By doing so they risk themselves being the next target.

Someone must know how these guns were acquired — who sold them or who it was stolen from. This might lead to the actual perpetrator of the crime. I know that I would be hesitant, if I lived in a neighbor-



hood where this code exists.

We send thousands of young Americans into combat every year, all of them fully aware that they could get killed trying to defend this wonderful country of ours. It takes a lot of courage to do this and thank heaven there are enough young men and women available to take the risk.

Now, I ask, are there not enough people living in these neighborhoods willing to help the police put an end to these horrible killings. Some of them must know something.

I can't picture any parent not being aware of their children coming home with an AK-47 and loads of ammunition. I can't imagine too many kids living in these neighborhoods not knowing who owns such a weapon and where they got it.

There are anonymous hotlines to provide this information to the police and I feel confident that they will not release the name of the informers, but even if they did

is it not worth taking some risk to make your neighborhood and your children safe in the future.

These criminals are armed better than most military men and certainly better than the average police officer. I guess what I am saying is that there is a war going on right in our midst and although we spend billions fighting wars in foreign lands that hardly involve us, we haven't found a way to deal with this.

Just look at those pictures of those little kids whose lives ended well before they should have and in the most horrible way, and tell me that something shouldn't be done to prevent it in the future. In the old days there were gangs, fights, rocks thrown or an occasional knife fight, but I don't ever recall the mass slaughter being caused by these horrible automatic weapons that seem so easy to acquire.

I know, all the Second Amendment people are saying "here he goes again," but I would like any of them to argue these points with me. I can promise that you will lose the argument.

I truly believe that there always are at least several people who are aware of who these killers are and are scared to death to report them. A new slant might be that those who do the reporting, instead of being called snitches, be referred to as heroes, those willing to risk their own lives for the safety of others.

Are there any of you out there that feel that as I do?

Remember King Carter.