**Call for research on media in gun violence**

JAKE COYLE,

Last updated 10:40 17/01/2013

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | |  |  |  | | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  |  | Share |  | |



FIGHTING VIOLENCE: US President Barack Obama unveils a series of proposals to counter gun violence as Vice President Joe Biden looks.

**Film**

[Globe win worth more than Oscar](http://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/8183895/Globe-win-worth-more-than-Oscar) [The real spy behind Argo](http://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/8180456/The-real-spy-behind-Argo) [Gay community hails Foster's speech](http://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/8178825/Gay-community-hails-Fosters-speech) [Stone gives Vergara sex scene tips](http://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/8179387/Stone-gives-Vergara-sex-scene-tips) [Jodie Foster puts it out there](http://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/8176306/Jodie-Foster-puts-it-out-there) [Argo, Les Miserables win best-pic Globes](http://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/8174655/Argo-Les-Miserables-win-best-pic-Globes) [Sally Field on playing Lincoln's wife](http://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/8154341/Sally-Field-on-playing-Lincolns-wife) [Tarantino rants over violence questions](http://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/8171203/Tarantino-rants-over-violence-questions) [Oscar actresses make history](http://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/oscars/8167904/Oscar-actresses-make-history) [The most polarising Oscar host?](http://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/oscars/8168192/The-most-polarising-Oscar-host)

Hollywood and the video game industry received scant attention when President Barack Obama [**unveiled sweeping proposals**](http://www.stuff.co.nz/world/americas/8188330/Obama-outlines-crackdown-on-gun-laws) for curbing gun violence in the wake of the Newtown, Connecticut, school shooting.

The White House pressed most forcefully for a reluctant Congress to pass universal background checks and bans on military-style assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines like the ones used in the Newtown, Connecticut, school shooting.

No connection was suggested between bloody entertainment fictions and real-life violence. Instead, the White House is calling on research on the effect of media and video games on gun violence.

Among the 23 executive measures signed on Wednesday by Obama is a directive to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and scientific agencies to conduct research into the causes and prevention of gun violence. The order specifically cited "investigating the relationship between video games, media images and violence."

The measure meant that media would not be exempt from conversations about violence, but it also suggested the White House would not make Hollywood, television networks and video game makers a central part of the discussion. It's a relative footnote in the White House's broad, multi-point plan, and Obama did not mention violence in media in his remarks.

The White House plan did mention media, but suggested that any effort would be related to ratings systems or technology: "The entertainment and video game industries have a responsibility to give parents tools and choices about the movies and programs their children watch and the games their children play."

The administration is calling on Congress to provide US$10 million (NZ$11.9 million) for the research.

The CDC has been barred by Congress to use funds to "advocate or promote gun control," but the White House order claims that "research on gun violence is not advocacy" and that providing information to Americans on the issue is "critical public health research."

Since 26 were killed by a gunman at Sandy Hook Elementary in December, some have called for changes in the entertainment industry, which regularly churns out first-person shooter video games, grisly primetime dramas and casually violent blockbusters.

Hollywood, in turn, has suggested willingness for self-reflection. Motion Picture Association of America chairman and CEO Christopher Dodd - a former longtime US senator from Connecticut - earlier said the MPAA stands "ready to be part of the national conversation."

After the Newtown massacre, Wayne Pierre, vice-president of the National Rifle Association, attacked the entertainment industry, calling it "a callous, corrupt and corrupting shadow industry that sells and sows violence against its own people."

He cited a number of video games and films, most of them many years old, like the movies American Psycho and Natural Born Killers, and the video games Mortal Kombat and Grand Theft Auto.

President Obama's adviser, David Axelrod, had tweeted that he's in favour of gun control, "but shouldn't we also question marketing murder as a game?"

Others have countered that the same video games and movies are played and watched around the world, but that the tragedies of gun violence are for other reasons endemic to the US.

Several R-rated films released after Newton have been swept into the debate. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the former California governor and action film star, recently told USA Today in discussing his new shoot-em-up film The Last Stand: "It's entertainment. People know the difference."

Quentin Tarantino, whose new film Django Unchained is a cartoonish, bloody spaghetti western set in the slavery-era South, has often grown testy when questioned about movie violence and real-life violence. Speaking to NPR, Tarantino said it was disrespectful to the memory of the victims to talk about movies: "I don't think one has to do with the other."

In 2011, the Supreme Court rejected a California law banning the sale of violent video games to children. The decision claimed that video games, like other media, are protected by the First Amendment. In dissent, Justice Stephen G. Breyer claimed previous studies showed the link between violence and video games, concluding "the video games in question are particularly likely to harm children."

Justice Antonin Scalia wrote that the government can't regulate depictions of violence, which he said were age-old, anyway: "Grimm's Fairy Tales, for example, are grim indeed."