

Written Testimony

April 9, 2014

Congressman Roger Williams (TX-25)

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the House Armed Services Committee to highlight a matter that is imperative for this Congress to act on – the Honoring the Fort Hood Heroes Act.

As you are all fully aware, in November of 2009, our nation was viciously attacked when an Islamic extremist opened fire on our troops at Fort Hood. We lost 14 innocent Americans that day – 12 military members, one civilian and an unborn child. Since the attack, the victims and survivors have received an outpouring of support from the surrounding community and nation, but not from the federal government.

During the military court-martial for the shooter, an Army major and psychologist, the accused admitted to shooting his fellow soldiers, saying he switched sides in what he called a U.S. war on Islam. Weeks before the trial, he released seven pages of handwritten documents to Fox News renouncing his U.S. citizenship and abandoning his military oath as a commissioned officer. He even told potential jurors that he supported Taliban and Shariah law.

He has done everything in his power to make it clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that his intent was to harm and kill U.S. soldiers in efforts to aid America's enemies.

It is beyond comprehension, then, that the current Administration has labeled this gruesome attack as "workplace violence" rather than a terrorist attack. Since the days following the shooting, the Pentagon's designation has favored political correctness over truth and justice. Nobody in America agrees that this was just a disgruntled employee...especially not the victims.

By labeling the 2009 attack as workplace violence, the victims and families of this tragedy are denied the benefits and treatment their counterparts receive who are injured or killed while serving in overseas combat zones. This extreme negligence has caused many victims to have to pay out of their own pockets for treatment – one man has even paid upwards of \$70,000. As Americans, we must demand the Pentagon fix this by reclassifying the shooting as combat related or by determining any other route that will allow the injured troops to be able to feed their families, receive sufficient medical treatment, and move forward with their lives. Anything less is a disservice to our country and an insult to all who wear the uniform.

Congressman John Carter (R-TX31) and I have been diligently garnering support for H.R. 3111, the Honoring the Fort Hood Heroes Act, a bipartisan bill with 225 cosponsors- which includes many members of this committee, as well as, Chairman McKeon. This bill would ensure the victims receive the benefits and military awards they deserve along with labeling the shooting as a terrorist attack. To date, the victims of the Fort Hood terrorist attack have not received the same awards and benefits as their deployed counterparts who are wounded or killed either through enemy action or a terrorist attack, because this attack took place on U.S. soil rather than in a designated combat zone such as Afghanistan. H.R. 3111 would correct this inequity and

provide these benefits to the Fort Hood victims. In addition, the federal government set a historic precedent when it awarded military victims of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks with the Purple Heart medal, and civilian victims with the Secretary of Defense Medal for the Defense of Freedom, and this legislation will continue that precedent for the Fort Hood victims. Included in our bill is the following:

Bill Summary:

- Declarations of Policy. The bill would declare that: (1) the attack constituted an act of terrorism; (2) the attack on Fort Hood could and should have been prevented, (3) the perpetrator, Nidal Hasan, had become radicalized and was principally motivated by an ideology of violent Islamist extremism; and (4) Hasan proved himself to be a traitor and an enemy of the U.S.
- Military Awards. The bill would require the Secretary of the Army to award Purple Hearts to those Soldiers who were killed/wounded in the attack, and require the Secretary of Defense to award the Secretary of Defense Medal of Freedom (Purple Heart equivalent for civilians) to civilians who were killed/wounded.
- Certain Benefits. The bill would provide certain benefits to the victims of the attack who were killed/wounded and their families, by deeming the killing/wounding to have occurred:
 - For Soldiers, in a combat zone and at the hands of an enemy of the United States.
 - For civilian DoD employees, by hostile action while serving alongside the Armed Forces during a contingency operation, and in a terrorist attack.

Possible Benefits: Under this legislation, victims and families of victims of the Fort Hood terrorist attack would be made eligible for certain benefits that have been withheld from them, including:

- Combat-related special compensation;
- Maximum coverage under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance;
- Tax breaks after death in combat zone or terrorist attack;
- Special pay for subjection to hostile fire or imminent danger;
- Unearned portions of bonuses;
- Combat-related injury rehabilitation pay; and
- Meals at military treatment facilities.

I know I speak for dozens of my colleagues and millions of Americans when I implore you to take into account this bill language as the Armed Services Committee considers its defense priorities for the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement. I look forward to working with the committee as we protect those who risk their lives protecting us.