

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4305

November 16, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

I sincerely appreciate you joining us at Fort Hood, Texas, last week for the memorial ceremony honoring the victims of the horrific November 5 attack. Thank you for your participation and your moving, heartfelt words. In the wake of this massacre, my prayers remain with the fallen, the injured, and their families, as I know yours do.

I look forward to questioning Attorney General Holder on Wednesday about the role that federal law enforcement agencies played in this particular case, as well as what actions they are taking to prevent radical Islam from finding a home in the U.S. Armed Forces. The federal government has a fundamental duty to our men and women in uniform to safeguard them against avoidable harm in the course of their service. We must protect the protectors whenever and wherever we are able, especially at home in the United States. Our government failed the brave Americans who were killed and wounded at Fort Hood. The devastation inflicted on them was preventable, and it is of paramount importance that we ascertain exactly where the system broke down.

The question of how this could ever happen on U.S. soil must be answered as soon as possible, so as to foreclose the possibility of future attacks of this nature. I understand that a myriad of investigations are underway, and I appreciate the importance of ascertaining the facts before making any judgments. Nonetheless, it seems increasingly likely that Islamist terrorism is to blame for this senseless attack. I was pleased that you alluded to this in your remarks at Fort Hood, stating that, "no faith justifies these murderous and craven acts; no just and loving God looks upon them with favor." I could not agree more.

Islamist terrorism represents one of the single most dangerous threats to the national security of the United States. As you know, this enemy seeks the complete and total destruction of our nation, our government, and our entire American way of life. As the 9/11 Commission stated in its report, "The enemy is not just 'terrorism.' It is the threat posed specifically by Islamist terrorism, by Bin Ladin and others who draw on a long tradition of extreme intolerance within a minority strain of Islam that does not distinguish politics from religion, and distorts both."

Al Qaeda, in a 1998 fatwa signed by its leaders, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, instructed that: "to kill the Americans and their allies—civilian and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it" Similarly, in a 2006 propaganda video, al Qaeda specifically urged viewers to "go on a shooting spree" at a key military installation. As more and more facts surrounding the Fort Hood attack surface, it looks increasingly probable that the alleged attacker, Major Nidal Hasan, heeded these

The Honorable Barack Obama
November 16, 2009
Page 2

terrorist calls to violence, compelled by a fanatical religious ideology. If Islamist terrorism was the driving force behind the senseless violence at Fort Hood, as it seems to be, this attack must serve as a call to action for the Federal Government.

The Fort Hood mass murder would not be the first time our service members have been violently assaulted from within their own ranks by an individual driven to act primarily by his religious ideology. As you may know, on March 23, 2003, during the initial phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom, an Army Sergeant named Hasan Akbar attacked his fellow service members in Kuwait with grenades and small arms, murdering two of them and wounding more than a dozen others. Akbar's diary passages illustrated a strong religious motivation behind his actions: "I will have to decide to kill my Muslim brothers fighting for Saddam Hussein or my battle buddies. . . . I may not have killed any Muslims, but being in the Army is the same thing. I may have to make a choice very soon on who to kill."

We must not blame Islam as a whole for the Fort Hood attack or others of its kind; yet at the same time, we cannot ignore the indisputable fact that some followers of Islam interpret their religion's scriptures and teachings as a mandate for the mass murder of innocents. Evidence indicating that terrorist activity may be in the offing must always be run to ground; federal agencies must follow every lead and look into every possible threat, regardless of whose particular sensitivities might be offended in the process. We must never allow the safety of those who defend our freedom to be made a secondary priority to political correctness.

Sincerely,



JOHN CORNYN
United States Senator