

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 6, 2013

The Honorable Charles Hagel
Secretary of Defense
c/o Assistant Secretary of Defense Elizabeth L. King
U.S. Department of Defense
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0101

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write today on behalf of the 14 murdered, the 32 wounded by gunfire and the many other soldiers, civilians and family members injured in the November 5, 2009, Fort Hood terror attack.

The Department of Defense and the Army have designated the attack by Major Nidal Hasan as “workplace violence.” This designation has since resulted in an embarrassing lack of care and treatment by our military for the victims and their families. We understand this decision was not made under your leadership. Therefore, we ask that you swiftly reclassify the victims’ deaths and injuries as “combat-related” so that they and their families may qualify for the full scope of benefits provided to service members and DoD civilian employees who are killed or injured in combat, and to ensure that they are treated with appropriate decency and respect from this point forward.

We have personally met victims of, and surviving family members of those killed in, the Fort Hood attack. They have revealed claims of mistreatment by the Army, which include but are not limited to: repeated denials and delays of medical treatment for individuals with physical injuries, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury; denials of retirement benefits; and overall negligence and disregard.

As strong supporters of our military, we understand the tremendous effort your Department undertakes to defend our nation, and we respect that our leaders face difficult decisions that accompany that responsibility. However, when members of our military and DoD civilians are brutally attacked – whether at home or abroad, by a “lone wolf” or by a “card-carrying member” of a designated terrorist organization – it is our responsibility to provide adequate oversight over DoD and the Army’s policies and decisions, both before and after such an attack.

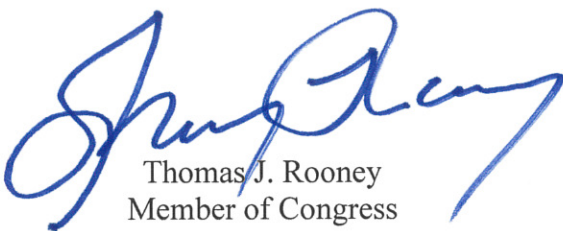
The Army’s preferential treatment of Major Hasan – notwithstanding his open extremism and support for religious violence – and the FBI’s refusal to interview Hasan or notify his superiors of his multiple communications with the notorious terrorist leader Anwar al-Awlaki, apparently because of political sensitivities in the Washington Field Office, led to the Fort Hood attack. Frankly, we are deeply concerned that the same considerations of “political correctness” that caused the horrible toll of deaths and injuries at Fort Hood have also informed the Army’s decision to deem his attack an act of “workplace violence”.

A number of the victims of the attack report that they were made personal promises by senior government officials that they and their family members would be “well taken care of” and that the “government will make [them] whole.” We believe that in the aftermath of the terrorist attack at Fort Hood – publicly recognized as such by the National Counterterrorism Center, the State Department, the current Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, among others – the decision to deem the incident “workplace violence” was an irresponsible, indefensible breach of our nation’s sacred pledge to our service members. As the DoD and the Army are presumably aware, the current “workplace violence” designation denies the victims and their families cost-free VA health care for five years, cost-free counseling and critical mental health services, tax free disability benefits, and Combat-Related Special Compensation, and makes them ineligible to receive the Purple Heart and its associated benefits.

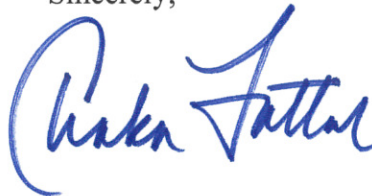
At this stage, designating the victims’ deaths and injuries as “combat-related” is a necessary and appropriate first step of good faith by your Department. Such a designation would be tangible evidence that our government keeps its promises, albeit years after the fact. Furthermore, a “combat-related” designation is a necessary condition for the heroes of that day, and their families who survive them, to finally begin the process of healing.

Therefore, we respectfully request that you reclassify the terrorist attack at Fort Hood as “combat-related” in support of the victims, survivors and their families who have to suffer the effects of this horrifying incident every day. The current “workplace violence” designation is a distortion of the truth that discredits our military, and it should be overturned immediately.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Rooney
Member of Congress



Chaka Fattah
Member of Congress



Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

cc:

The Honorable John M. McHugh, Secretary of the Army