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Rampage kills 12, wounds 31

SUSPECT IS ARMY PSYCHIATRIST WHO WORKED AT WALTER REED

By Peter Slevin

The gunshots came out of the blue.

An Army psychiatrist, trained to treat soldiers under stress, allegedly opened fire Thursday in a crowded medical building at Fort Hood, Tex. When the assault ended minutes later, the attack had become what is believed to be the largest mass shooting ever to occur on a U.S. military base. Twelve were killed, 31 wounded.

Nidal M. Hasan, 39, a major who had made a career in the military, fired a pair of pistols, one of them semiautomatic, in the soldier readiness facility, dropping and scattering people as they waited to see doctors, according to authorities. Hasan and a civilian policewoman exchanged fire, they said. Both were hit. Both survived.

When the gunfire stopped, soldiers schooled in battlefield medicine ripped their clothes to make tourniquets and bandages. Someone hustled to seal off an auditorium in the same building where 138 troops were marking their graduation from college. Sirens typically used to warn of tornados sweeping across the plains alerted residents, schools locked down and the Fort Hood community struggled to understand what had just happened.

In the aftermath, a string of unanswered questions remained about the shooter's motives, his background and whether the military was aware that he posed a risk to his colleagues.

In Iraq, an Army journalist telephoned his wife, who lives on the base. When she did not answer, he turned to e-mail. She said there had been shootings and an order to secure all doors and windows.

"This is ridiculous," Naveed Ali Shah, the soldier, told his wife. "I'm in the war zone, not you!"

The accused gunman, initially reported killed but later revealed to be in custody in a hospital, is a Virginia-born doctor who once practiced at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The motive remains unclear, although some sources reported the suspect is opposed to U.S. involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq and upset about an imminent deployment.

The attack erupted shortly after lunchtime on the sprawling complex that has absorbed more than 500 fatalities in Iraq and Afghanistan, more than any other base. Investigators said their initial impression was that the gunman had acted alone.

Seven of the wounded were taken to nearby Metroplex Adventist Hospital, while 10 went to Scott and White Hospital about 30 miles away in Temple. Both received a huge turnout for blood donors, so many volunteers that they eventually had to close their doors and turn away hundreds. The identities of the wounded were not released.

Addressing reporters gathered outside Fort Hood, northeast of Austin, Army Lt. Gen. Robert Cone said of the incident: "It's a terrible tragedy. It's stunning," adding that "soldiers and family members and many of the great civilians who work here are absolutely devastated."

Outside the closed gates to the post, people who were initially calm grew increasingly anxious as repeated calls to loved ones inside went unanswered or resulted in busy signals, the Waco Tribune-Herald reported.

Staff Sgt. Fanuaee Veae, 32, was among those locked out. He told the Tribune-Herald that he was at the soldier readiness facility about an hour before the shootings happened. He tried unsuccessfully to get back to the center, but "I got mad because they wouldn't let me in."

"This is really hard for me to take in right now. I can't believe this," he said.

The suspect

Hasan, graduated from Virginia Tech in 1997 and earned a doctorate in psychiatry from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda. He spent at least six years at Walter Reed before moving to Fort Hood.

He had been a "very devout" worshiper at the Muslim Community Center in Silver Spring, attending prayers at least once a day, often in his Army fatigues, said Faizul Khan, a former imam there.

"To know something like this happened, I don't know what got into his mind," Khan said. "There was nothing extremist in his questions. He never showed any frustration... He never showed any remorse or wish for vengeance on anybody."

A co-worker identified as Col. Terry Lee told Fox News that Hasan opposed the U.S. role in Iraq and Afghanistan and told others that "we should not be in the war in the first place." He said Hasan acknowledged that soldiers have a duty to follow the commander in chief's orders, but was hoping that President Obama would order a pullout from the conflicts.

"When things weren't going that way," Lee said, "he became more agitated, more frustrated with the conflicts over there."

Obama promised to "get answers to every single question about this horrible incident." He offered his prayers to the wounded and the families of those killed, calling them "men and women who have made the selfless and courageous decision to risk — and at times give — their lives to protect the rest of us."

"It's difficult enough when we lose these brave Americans in battles overseas," Obama said. "It is horrifying that they should come under fire at an Army base on American soil."

A war zone

Thousands of soldiers have passed through the gates of Fort Hood on their way to Iraq and Afghanistan, and more than 500 have not come home. Post-combat stress has been an acknowledged problem on the base, and this year alone, 10 Fort Hood soldiers have committed suicide.

Lt. Gen. Rick Lynch, the former base commander, won praise for trying to reduce stress. Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Army Times that "there's something going on at Hood that I think is extraordinary that we need to emulate until we find something better."

The Council on American-Islamic Relations moved quickly to call the attack "cowardly." The organization, an advocacy group for American Muslims, said it condemned the shooting "in the strongest terms possible."

"No political or religious ideology could ever excuse such wanton and indiscriminate violence," CAIR said in a statement. "The attack was particularly heinous in that it targeted the all-volunteer army that protects our nation."

Another shooting

The Fort Hood shooting follows a June incident outside a Little Rock military recruiting center in which one soldier was killed and another wounded. Authorities said Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad, who converted to Islam and changed his name as an adult, acted alone in the incident. He has pleaded not guilty.

Before the shooting, Muhammad traveled to Yemen, where he emerged on the radar of a Joint Terrorism Task Force. Local police said he was motivated in part by political and religious fervor.

The shootings at Fort Hood came 18 years after a massacre in a restaurant in nearby Killeen, where George Hennard used a pair of 9mm pistols to kill 22 people and wound 17 before using his last bullet on himself.

At the time, it was the deadliest mass shooting in the country, eclipsed in 2007 when 33 people were fatally shot at Virginia Tech.

A Killeen church opened Thursday evening for a prayer service for the Fort Hood victims that drew several dozen people.

The New York Times²

November 7, 2009

The Horror at Fort Hood

Editorial

It is always a shock — and a cause for deep sadness — when a gunman fires malevolently at crowds of innocent people. We have seen it far too often: at Columbine High School in Colorado a decade ago; on the campus of Virginia Tech two years ago; at a center for immigrants in upstate New York in April; and in downtown Orlando, Fla., where a gunman shot and killed one person and wounded five others on Friday.

Still, this week's rampage at the sprawling Fort Hood Army base in central Texas seems especially shocking.

On Thursday, an Army psychiatrist, clad in a military uniform, allegedly sprayed bullets inside a medical building, killing 13 people and wounding at least 30. The suspected gunman, Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, has counseled scores of soldiers suffering post-traumatic stress disorder after serving in Iraq or Afghanistan. His victims on Thursday were men and women who were preparing to deploy to the battle zones or had returned from there.

Even more shocking, they were attacked on a heavily guarded military installation within the United States where they surely must have felt secure.

In the aftermath of this unforgivable attack, it will be important to avoid drawing prejudicial conclusions from the fact that Major Hasan is an American Muslim whose parents came from the Middle East.

President Obama was right when he told Americans, "we don't know all the answers yet" and cautioned everyone against "jumping to conclusions."

Unverified reports, some from his family members, suggest that Major Hasan complained of harassment by fellow soldiers for being a Muslim, that he hoped to get out of a deployment to Afghanistan, that he sought a discharge from the Army and that he opposed the American military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. There were reports that some soldiers said they had heard him shout "God is Great" in Arabic before he started firing. But until investigations are complete, no one can begin to imagine what could possibly have motivated this latest appalling rampage.

There may never be an explanation. And, certainly, there can never be a justification.

For now, all that can be said is that our hearts go out to the families of the 12 soldiers and one civilian killed. And we are hoping for the fast recovery of all those who were wounded, including Kimberly Munley, a civilian police officer stationed at the base, who shot Major Hasan and ended the killing.

In a place of courage, she showed extraordinary courage.

The Wall Street Journal³

NOVEMBER 10, 2009

Dr. Phil and the Fort Hood Killer

His terrorist motive is obvious to everyone but the press and the Army brass.

By DOROTHY RABINOWITZ

It can by now come as no surprise that the Fort Hood massacre yielded an instant flow of exculpatory media meditations on the stresses that must have weighed on the killer who mowed down 13 Americans and wounded 29 others. Still, the intense drive to wrap this clear case in a fog of mystery is eminently worthy of notice.

The tide of pronouncements and ruminations pointing to every cause for this event other than the one obvious to everyone in the rational world continues apace. Commentators, reporters, psychologists and, indeed, army spokesmen continue to warn portentously, "We don't yet know the motive for the shootings."

What a puzzle this piece of vacuity must be to audiences hearing it, some, no doubt, with outrage. To those not terrorized by fear of offending Muslim sensitivities, Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan's motive was instantly clear: It was an act of terrorism by a man with a record of expressing virulent, anti-American, pro-jihadist sentiments. All were conspicuous signs of danger his Army superiors chose to ignore.

What is hard to ignore, now, is the growing derangement on all matters involving terrorism and Muslim sensitivities. Its chief symptoms: a palpitating fear of discomfiting facts and a will-ingness to discard those facts and embrace the richest possible variety of ludicrous theories as to the motives behind an act of Islamic terrorism. All this we have seen before but never in such naked form. The days following the Fort Hood rampage have told us more than we want to know, perhaps, about the depth and reach of this epidemic.

One of the first outbreaks of these fevers, the night of the shootings, featured television's star psychologist, Dr. Phil, who was outraged when fellow panelist and former JAG officer Tom Kenniff observed that he had been listening to a lot of psychobabble and evasions about Maj. Hasan's motives.

A shocked Dr. Phil, appalled that the guest had publicly mentioned Maj. Hasan's Islamic identity, went on to present what was, in essence, the case for Maj. Hasan as victim. Victim of deployment, of the Army, of the stresses of a new kind of terrible war unlike any other we have known. Unlike, can he have meant, the kind endured by those lucky Americans who fought and died at Iwo Jima, say, or the Ardennes?

It was the same case to be presented, in varying forms, by guest psychologists, the media, and a representative or two from the military, for days on end.

The quality and thrust of this argument was best captured by the impassioned Dr. Phil, who asked us to consider, "how far out of touch with reality do you have to be to kill your fellow Americans ... this is not a well act." And how far out of touch with reality is such a question, one asks in return—not only of Dr. Phil, but of the legions of commentators like him immersed in the labyrinths of motive hunting even as the details of Maj. Hasan's proclivities became ever clearer and more ominous.

To kill your fellow Americans—as many as possible, unarmed and in the most helpless of circumstances, while shouting "Allahu Akbar" (God is great), requires, of course, only murderous hatred—the sort of mindset that regularly eludes the Dr. Phils of our world as the motive for mass murder of this kind.

As the meditations on Maj. Hasan's motives rolled on, "fear of deployment" has served as a major theme—one announced as fact in the headline for the New York Times's front-page story: "Told of War Horror, Gunman Feared Deployment." The authority for this intelligence? The perpetrator's cousin. No story could have better suited that newspaper's ongoing preoccupation with the theme of madness in our fighting men, and the deadly horrors of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, than this story of a victim of war pressures gone berserk. The one fly in the ointment—Maj. Hasan had of course seen no war, and no combat.

Still, with a bit of stretching, adherents of Maj. Hasan-as-war-victim theme found a substitute of sorts—namely the fears allegedly provoked in him by his exposure, as an army psychiatrist, to the stories of men who had been deployed. The thesis then: Maj. Hasan's mental stress, provoked by the suffering of Americans who had been in combat, caused him to go out and butcher as many of these soldiers as he could. Let's try putting that one before a jury.

By Sunday morning, Gen. George Casey Jr., Army chief of staff, confronted questions put to him by ABC's George Stephanopolous—among them the matter of the complaints about Maj. Hasan's anti-American tirades that were made by fellow students in military classes, as well as other danger signs ignored by officials when they were reported, apparently for fear of offense to a Muslim member of the military.

These were speculations, Gen. Casey repeatedly cautioned. We need to be very careful, he explained, "We are a very diverse army." Mr. Stephanopolous then helpfully summarized matters: This case then was either a case of premeditated terror—or the man just snapped.

The general was not about to address such questions. He was there to recite the required pieties, and describe the military priorities . . . which are, it appears, a concern above all for the sensitivities of a diverse army, a concern so great as to render even the mention of salient facts out of order, as "speculation." "This terrible event," Gen. Casey noted, "would be an even greater tragedy if our diversity becomes a casualty."

To hear this, and numerous other such pronouncements of recent days, was to be reminded of all those witnesses to the suspicious behavior of the 9/11 hijackers who held their tongues for fear of being charged with discrimination. It has taken Maj. Hasan, and the fantastic efforts to explain away his act of bloody hatred, to bring home how much less capable we are of recognizing the dangers confronting us than we were even before September 11.

Corrections & Amplifications: Maj. Hasan is a psychiatrist. An earlier version of the article stated he was a psychologist.

Ms. Rabinowitz is a member of the Journal's editorial board.

The Rubin Report⁴

Sunday, November 8, 2009

Great Moments in "Psychologically Disturbed" Gunmen Committing Mass Murder

By Barry Rubin

[Subscribing is welcomed. Note: This is satire designed to show the ludicrous nature of the media coverage on the Ft. Hood issue. It is not designed to trivialize a terrible event but to make people understand better what happened and how the event is being dangerously distorted.]

When John Wilkes Booth opened fire on President Abraham Lincoln in Ford's Theatre in April 1865, the media was puzzled. "True, the actor was outspoken in his Confederate sympathies and viewed himself as a Southerner," said someone who knew him, "but that was no reason he might want Lincoln to be dead." The day before he went on his shooting spree, Booth hoisted a big Confederate flag outside his hotel room. After he leaped onto the stage he shouted, "Thus ever to tyrants!" the motto of the rebel state of Virginia.

The New York Times reported that Booth was psychologically unstable and was frightened of the Civil War coming to an end and having to face a peacetime actors' surplus. "His political views had nothing to do with the motives for this tragic act," it said, quoting experts.

After Fritz Reichmark opened fire on fellow soldiers at Fort Dix in January 1942 the media was puzzled. "True, he used to go to German-American Bund meetings," said one fellow soldier, "but he only wore the swastika armband in his off-hours." Reichmark would regale other soldiers with diatribes against the Jews, Winston Churchill, and Communists. The day before he went on his shooting spree, Reichmark gave out copies of Mein Kampf to neighbors. Soldiers who survived reported he was shouting "Heil Hitler!" while firing at them.

The New York Times reported that Reichmark was psychologically unstable and was frightened of being shipped out to North Africa because he was a coward, though this doesn't explain his making a suicide attack when his job wouldn't have required him to go into combat. "His German ancestry and political views had nothing to do with the motives for this tragic act," it said, quoting experts. The newspaper urged that the main lesson coming out of this event was to fight more firmly against Germanophobia.

When Padraic O'Brian bombed a restaurant in London with massive loss of life, the media was puzzled. "True, he used to go to IRA rallies," said a cousin, "and he would rant for hours about how the British invaders should be wiped out" but the media reported that this had nothing to do with this attack which was caused by his psychological problems. As he fired at pursuing police, O'Brian yelled: "Up the republic!"

The Guardian reported: "His Irish identity and political views had nothing to do with the motives for this tragic act." The newspaper urged that the main lesson coming out of this event was the need to fight more firmly to ensure that Northern Ireland was handed over to the Irish Republic and that Israel be wiped off the map.

When a group of 19 terrorists flew two planes into the World Trade Center, one into the Pentagon and the fourth crashed on the way to the White House, the media was puzzled. "True, they wrote letters to Usama bin Ladin and expressed radical views but their act of violence must have

been connected to their extreme poverty back in Saudi Arabia," one expert was quoted as saying. When informed the young men all came from well-off families, he responded, "Oh."

The New York Times reported that they were all psychologically unstable and had difficult times in forming stable relationships with women. "The fact that they were Arabs and Muslims or their political views had nothing to do with the motives for this tragic act," it explained. The newspaper urged that the main lesson coming out of the attack was the need to fight against Islamophobia and Arabophobia as well as for the United States to make more concessions in the Middle East and to impeach President George W. Bush.

The point of the above exercise is to make the following points:

—Individuals who commit terrorist acts often have psychological problems but the thing that justified, organized, and ensured that violence would be committed were political ideas.

—Whenever an individual who belongs to any group commits a crime, it is possible that some will stigmatize the entire group. Most Americans or Westerners today, however, will not do so. The most important issue is to identify why the terrorist act happened and what to look for (including which type of individuals) to prevent future attacks.

—When there is clear evidence that danger signs were ignored because people were afraid of being stigmatized for doing their job of protecting their fellows, that is a dangerous mistake that must be corrected.

—Someone who is "afraid" of being sent into a war zone is not likely to handle that cowardice by standing up with a gun in a suicide attack and shooting people until he falls to the ground with about four bullet wounds.

—The media can often be stupid but when it censors reporting for political or social engineering reasons, freedom is jeopardized. The correct phrase is: The public's right to know. It is not: The public has to be guided into drawing the proper conclusions by slanting and limiting information even if the conclusions being pressed on them are lies and nonsense.

Barry Rubin is director of the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center and editor of the Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA) Journal. His latest books are *The Israel-Arab Reader* (seventh edition), *The Long War for Freedom: The Arab Struggle for Democracy in the Middle East* (Wiley), and *The Truth About Syria* (Palgrave-Macmillan).

The Washington Post⁵

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Goodness and justice over religious affiliation

Ramdas Lamb*

Q: What is the proper role of religion — and personal religious belief — in the U.S. armed forces? Should a particular religious affiliation disqualify someone from active military service? How far should the military go to accommodate personal religious beliefs and practices?

The fact that someone has personal religious beliefs should not, in itself, be a reason for disqualification from active military service. There are more than 3,800 chaplains currently serving in the U.S. military, and this suggests that those religions and denominations represented see serving in the military as a legitimate and important occupation and even career. Having such individuals in the military helps make it more of a cross section of the population and values that are held.

All U.S. military personnel must take the Uniformed Services Oath of Office, either the Oath of Enlistment or the Oath for Commissioned Officers. If the necessary oath runs counter to one's deeply held religion beliefs, then there is definite potential for problems to arise. Loyalty and commitment to one's duties in any organization to which one belongs are important. Those who cannot fulfill assigned military duties and commitments because of deeply held religious or moral beliefs, irrespective of religious affiliation, should not be in the military, or should be limited in roles within it. If an individual is already in the military when a situation arises that runs directly counter to deeply held beliefs based and moral convictions, then that individual should apply for conscientious objector status and, if necessary, seek to leave military service. It must be remembered that there is no draft in the U.S. No one is forced to enter the military. If one enlists, it is out of choice, and the ramifications and responsibilities of that choice should be clear and must be accepted.

Members of every religious tradition have, at one point or another in history, found themselves in countries with values and/or political ideologies that are in fundamental disagreement with their own. Those living in a dictatorship who cannot leave have to search within and decide to what extent their religious beliefs are important enough to lead them to action, knowing the consequences that may result. Those in countries with a more democratic style government can, alone or in groups, try to change the government through elections, organized protests, etc. Further, if those who find their morals and values in deep conflict, are in a country to which they have immigrated and are residing out of choice, and see no way of peacefully affecting change, then that choice should be rethought and they should consider finding find a country that is more compatible with their beliefs.

Connected with the issue of Muslims serving in the U.S. military, there has been recent discussion about the Muslim prohibition against killing other Muslims. Yet, throughout history, most Muslims in battle have been killed by other Muslims, and it is likely that most Christians in battles have been killed by other Christians, as was the case in World Wars I and II. For many people, religious affiliation is an important aspect of one's being, yet one's concept of morality and goodness generally trumps this, as it should. Just because someone happens to claim the same religious affiliation as another does not mean that they share the same sense of decency and what is right. People in all religions have found reason to justify killing other members in battle, presumably

*Hindu monk in India from 1969-1978. Professor, University of Hawaii, world religions and contemporary American religion

because they saw those they killed as being bad, immoral, or supporting a bad government. How is today any different? Religious affiliation or affinity should not inoculate people from having to endure the consequences of their actions.

Today as in the past, many Americans find themselves at odds with what they perceive as the moral direction of the country. Some understand this as an inevitable result of living in a democracy that allows people of various belief systems to be citizens, and they accept the situation. Others attempt to seek peaceful change through any of a great variety of means. A few opt for leaving. There is no law to prevent someone from doing any of these. As for those who are in the military, there is no draft in the U.S., so they are in because they chose to participate. Once such a choice is made, then the ramifications and responsibilities of that choice should be clear and should be accepted.

There are thousands of Muslims serving honorably in the U.S. military fighting against other Muslims. They see justification in fighting Taliban and other Muslim terrorists who kill innocent Muslims and non-Muslims in the name of Allah. Peace loving Iraqi and Afghani Muslims, as well as Muslims in the U.S. military stationed in those countries, see themselves fighting to save their country and families or fighting against terrorism. This has gone on in their countries since before the U.S. intervened, and it will likely continue long after we leave. Unfortunately, using violence to settle differences has long been a reality in much of the world.

Finally, for members of any religious tradition who choose to be in the military but have personal religious beliefs and practices for which certain accommodations are requested, the military should definitely do what it can to provide these as long as they do not run counter to the needs and abilities of the military. Examples of the kinds of accommodations might involve chaplaincy services, dietary restrictions, religious headware or symbols, time for observance of ritual holy days, etc. Religious belief and military service are part and parcel of the societies of most countries. Generally, they have been able to find compatibility. There have been times of antagonism and difficulty in the U.S. in this regards, but for the most part, members of the American military services have found ways to live the religious values they hold while serving, and we have all benefited as a result.

Notes

¹ http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/05/AR2009110503467_pf.html

² <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/07/opinion/07sat1.html?scp=1&sq=The%20Horror%20at%20Fort%20Hood%20&st=cse>

³ <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704402404574525831785724114.html>

⁴ <http://rubinreports.blogspot.com/2009/11/great-moments-in-psychologically.html>

⁵ http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/ramdas_lamb/2009/11/goodnes_and_the_desire_for_justice_over_religious_affiliation.html