

# Dayton Daily News

## Fort Hood massacre victims, wounded to get Purple Hearts

**A local psychologist who was at Fort Hood when the tragedy happened says the honor was overdue.**

By [Barrie Barber](#) - Staff Writer

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CENTERVILLE —

A retired Army Reserve colonel who survived the Fort Hood massacre has declared victory in a years-long battle to get the recognition of Purple Hearts to wounded soldiers, but would still press for the Army to do more to compensate the victims.

Kathy Platoni, a Centerville psychologist who survived the massacre, said the recent recognition of the Purple Heart for killed or wounded soldiers and the Defense of Freedom medal to civilian employees was overdue for the Nov. 5, 2009 attack that left 13 dead and more than 30 wounded at the Texas military base.



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Charles Dharapak

In this Nov. 23, 2009 file photo. the honor guard carries the casket of Fort Hood shooting victim Army Lt. Col. [... read more](#)

The medals bring “a sense of relief and does provide some degree of closure,” said Platoni, a veteran of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. “It also brings about a great measure of sadness because many of the medals will be awarded posthumously. People were killed. I saw them die that day and it just brings back a tremendous amount of sadness for something that could have been so readily prevented.”

A change in federal law under the most recent defense bill permitted bestowing the medals. The expanded law recognizes eligibility of active-duty soldiers targeted by a foreign terrorist organization or an attacker who was in contact with or inspired by foreign terrorists. At first, federal authorities had treated the attack as an act of workplace violence, which prohibited the killed and injured from obtaining the medals.

Forty-two soldiers and two civilian employees met the criteria for the medals, according to Lt. Col. Ben Garrett, an Army spokesman.



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Jay Janner

Spc. Kristen Haley, right, the fiancée of Sgt. First Class Daniel Ferguson who was killed in the Fort Hood shooting, is [... read more](#)

Platoni, describing herself as a “pit bull” in her advocacy for the victims and declaring the shootings a terrorist act, has been outspoken in criticizing federal authorities for missing warning signs prior to Army Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, now 45, shooting and killing the soldiers and civilians that day.

In August 2013, a military court convicted and sentenced Hasan, who reportedly was in contact with a suspected terrorist before the shootings, to death. Paralyzed in the attack, Hasan is on death row at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

For Howard M. Berry Jr., 58, father of the late Staff Sgt. Joshua Berry, a Fort Hood survivor who suffered post-traumatic stress disorder and tragically committed suicide two years ago, the Purple Hearts for victims were not enough.

“I think it’s a half-measure,” Berry said.

The Cincinnati resident attributed his son’s death to dealing with the strain of the aftermath of the shooting. Joshua Berry had returned from a deployment to Afghanistan when he found himself in the chaos at Fort Hood. The staff sergeant, who had barred a door to prevent the gunman from entering a building, dove over a desk and dislocated his shoulder during the attack, according to his father.

Berry said he had tried unsuccessfully to get an additional charge filed against Hasan after his son’s death and Joshua Berry’s name added to the list of those who died because of the attack.

Howard Berry traveled to Washington, D.C., and wrote letters to the president and every member of Congress about his concerns and his struggle to get health care treatment for his son. He said he dealt with stonewalling among the ranks of some members of Congress, the military and the Veterans Administration when he sought answers.

“They forgot about him,” he said. “... I was treated with the same indifference my son was.”

The language that awards Purple Hearts to those injured or killed at Fort Hood does not include recognition of post-traumatic stress disorder, Platoni said, a change from the Honoring the Fort Hood Heroes Act introduced in 2013 that didn't pass Congress, but included that provision.

Platoni also was frustrated those who allowed Hasan to stay in uniform prior to the attack have not been held accountable under the law.

“I have to say this is the highest form of moral bankruptcy that these people will never be held to the standard of being held accountable,” she said. “This was not a disgruntled employee, this was not (only) an act of workplace violence, and it's delusional to think that it was.”

She advocated combat action medals to those caught in the fray and additional compensation to meet their needs.

“Many of those who have been unable to return to the workforce because of their wounds will never be compensated for their losses in income and the financial ruin they have faced,” she said. “Those who would suffer severe psychological injuries rendering them unable to sustain employment will never be compensated and post-traumatic stress disorder is rampant among many of the survivors, even those not physically wounded.”

“... There's countless wounds that do not bleed that will continue to cause great pain among the victims of that tragic day in our history,” she said.

A request for a response from an Army spokesman to Platoni's comments was not immediately available Tuesday.

According to the Army, a Purple Heart recipient qualifies for combat-related special compensation at retirement, but only if they retire. The soldiers may be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Veterans Administration benefits may be available, also.