

Purple Hearts for Fort Hood WIA AND KIA

The Rest of the Story

It will be a glorious day when the Fort Hood Massacre wounded and the families of those who lost their lives at the hands of an Islamic terrorist madman, are presented their long overdue Purple Heart Medals and the civilian Defense Medal for the Defense of Freedom, posthumously in the case of the deceased. Finally, their service and sacrifices will be recognized and celebrated, but there is so much more to the story left unsaid. Justice is finally being served, but sadly, only in part. That the Obama administration labored for years to quash these provisions listed in the National Defense Authorization Act remains a travesty of justice.

Nevertheless it is entirely appropriate to deliver thanks to the Secretary of the Army, John McHugh, for providing some degree of closure to the wounded and the families of the deceased. More importantly, Representatives Carter, Williams and Thornberry and Senators Cornyn and Cruz deserve even greater commendation for endeavoring to assure that long ago warranted benefits are granted for these victims.

Still, it is inconceivable that the Fort Hood Heroes Act was never even subjected to a vote and never made it out of committee. This act would have guaranteed full benefits, compensations and entitlements due the wounded and the families of the deceased. Instead, more than 5 long years had to pass before Congress rewrote the language that entitles the wounded and the dead to their Purple Hearts, political correctness having reigned supreme until Congress came to their senses.

It is equally mind-numbing and a miscarriage of injustice that none of the members of the Department of the Army who supervised the shooter and

that overlooked his extreme radicalization, promoted him, and awarded him an elite fellowship in order to simply transfer the problem elsewhere, have never been held accountable. This is the highest form of moral bankruptcy, making them accomplices to mass murder. That this massacre continues to be labeled one of workplace violence committed by a disgruntled employee is purely delusional and contemptible. That three Secretaries of Defense, including Gates, Panetta, and Hagel refused to change this designation exceeds disgracefulness. To add to these despicable inactions, victims of the 9/11 attacks on the Pentagon were awarded Purple Hearts. Enough said.

Though the news is good, this is far from the end of the story:

1. Only those physically wounded are eligible to receive Purple Heart Medals. Those who have been unable to return to the work force because of their wounds will not be compensated for their losses in income and financial ruin. Those who have suffered severe psychological injuries, rendering them unable to sustain employment either, will never be compensated. PTSD is rampant among many of the survivors, even those who were not physically wounded. There is no such lifeline for those whose emotional lives lay in ruins, as if any of us could ever or would ever be the same.
2. Between two and four Soldiers have taken their own lives in the aftermath of the massacre, including SSG Joshua Berry, of Cincinnati. The colossal path of destruction created by the shooter and the issue of suicides among survivors has been completely ignored by the Department of the Army. Though he was physically wounded during the systematic assassinations of 12 Service members and one retiree, his family qualifies for nothing because, according to one senator, doing so would demean the sacrifices of those who died in combat. What a vile thing to say to the father of one who could not

sustain life in the aftermath of the battleground created on American soul by Hasan the Executioner.

3. That those wounded will receive combat-related special compensation pay upon retirement and be offered burial plots at Arlington National Cemetery does not even begin to offset the immeasurable damages done.
4. In essence, the wounded, the survivors have been betrayed by unfulfilled promises and largely abandoned by this administration until now.
5. In the meantime, the shooter has been given free rein to tell the Pope to advocate for jihad and to lobby ISIS to welcome him as a Soldier of Allah and citizen of the Islamic State. He is on death row at the Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth. Why is he allowed to have any contact with Islamic extremist organizations that seek to kill all of us as infidels? Why does he have any rights at all?
6. Lastly, the Department of the Army has failed to acknowledge the heroic acts of the many Soldiers and civilians at Fort Hood, who, on one of the most tragic pages in United States history, placed themselves at the mercy of this vicious killer and destroyer of lives to rush headlong into building 42003 to render emergency medical treatment under fire and to drag their brothers and sisters to safety. Though some units have stepped up to award Meritorious Unit Citations to all members of their units, this has not been universal and many of these awards, five years after the fact, remain in large piles on desks at Human Resources Command, including those that should have long ago been presented to my unit.
7. By the same token and with respect to the reclassification of eligibility criteria for awarding of the Purple Heart in the case of the Fort Hood Massacre, we have yet to acknowledge or recognize the

sacrifices of the many who, without regard for their own safety or for their very lives, again, **while under fire**. This should absolutely and unequivocally qualify them for the awarding of the Combat Action Badge of Combat Medical Badge. The shooter waged war against unarmed Soldiers and civilians. These first responders, heroes in their own right, saw no cost too high to rush headlong into their own Valley of Death to save the lives of their brother and sister Soldiers. We cannot afford to repeatedly allow the valor of heroes to be stolen away by political correctness. (Doing the right thing, once again, requires the stroke of a pen.)

Kathy Platoni, Psy.D., DAAPM, FAIS
COL (RET), US Army
Fort Hood Survivor