



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Peter T. King

Opening Statement

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**Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX)
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management**

**"Lessons From Fort Hood: Improving our Ability to Connect the
Dots"**

**September 14, 2012
Remarks as Prepared**

Before we begin today's hearing we should pay tribute to our brave diplomats who serve our nation abroad. Unfortunately one of Ambassadors, Christopher Stevens, and three of his colleagues were killed on Wednesday, the eleventh anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on the United States. These events, and others, should remind every American that we are a nation under siege and must remain vigilant doing all we can to uncover and take action against terrorist plots, whether the danger confronts us here in the United States or abroad.

In June 2009, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Robert Mueller acknowledged the immense challenges facing the Bureau stating:

"...it is not sufficient for us as an organization to respond to a terrorist attack after it has occurred. It is important for us as an organization to develop the intelligence to anticipate a terrorist attack. Developing

intelligence is developing facts. In the past we looked at collecting facts for the courtroom. We now have to think of ourselves as gathering facts and painting a picture of a particular threat, understanding the risk and moving to reduce that risk.”

On November 5, 2009, a gunman walked into the Soldier Readiness Center at Fort Hood, Texas, shouted Allah Akbar, and opened fire on unarmed soldiers and civilians. He killed 13 and wounded 42 others. This was the most horrific terrorist attack on US soil since 9/11.

Today we will examine the facts of the Fort Hood case as we now know them—to better understand how these facts that seem so obviously alarming now were missed by seasoned professionals—and to understand how the FBI and Intelligence Community as a whole can benefit from the lessons learned from the tragedy at Fort Hood.

The suspect in the Fort Hood shootings is Major Nidal Malik Hasan, a commissioned officer in the United States Army, who openly communicated with the Muslim cleric and terrorist Anwar al-Awlaki. Hasan characterized himself as a soldier of Allah and who was assigned the task of counseling our soldiers coming home from the battlefield.

Let’s step back in time and examine the facts. On May 31, 2009, Hasan sent one of several emails to al-Alwaki. The email read in part:

“I heard a speaker defending suicide bombings as permissible He contends that suicide is permissible in certain cases. ... He defines suicide as one who purposely takes his own life but insists that the important issue is your intention. ... Then he compares this to a soldier who sneaks into an enemy camp during dinner and detonates his suicide vest to prevent an attack that is known to be planned the following day. The suicide bombers intention is to kill numerous soldiers to prevent the attack to save his fellow people the following day. He is successful. His intention was to save his people/fellow soldiers and the strategy was to sacrifice his life. The logic seems to make sense to me ...”

In another email to al-Awlaki, Hasan asks to "Please keep me in your rolodex in case you find me useful and feel free to call me collect."

In December 2008, the FBI San Diego field office intercepted two emails from Hasan to al-Awlaki and identified the email as a "Product of Interest." Over the course of the next several months the San Diego field office and the Washington field office would exchange emails about how aggressively to investigate the Hasan lead. In June 2009, Washington sent the following email to San Diego:

"...given the context of his military/medical research and the content of his, to date unanswered [from AULAQI] email messages, WFO does not currently assess HASAN to be involved in terrorist activities."

The FBI agent in San Diego described Washington's inquiry into Hasan as "slim". The case was dropped until November 5th when the media began circulating reports of the massacre. At that time the San Diego agents knew immediately who the perpetrator was, saying, "you know who that is, that's our boy."

Years before the FBI knew of Nidal Hasan the Army Major was being noticed by his superiors and colleagues at Walter Reed Army Medical Center where he was a resident in the psychiatric program being trained to care for soldiers coming home from war. Two fellow officers described Hasan as a "ticking time bomb".

During his medical residency and post-residency fellowship Hasan demonstrated evidence of violent extremism. On several occasions, he presented sympathetic views towards radical Islam and wrote papers defending Osama Bin Laden—actions that enraged his classmates and professors. Yet no action was taken.

Instead, Major Hasan was rewarded for his work and promoted. His officer evaluation reports state:

"...among the better disaster and psychiatry fellows to have completed the Master of Public Health at the Uniformed Services University."

"...keen interest in Islamic culture and faith and has shown capacity to contribute to our psychological understanding of Islamic nationalism and how it may relate to events of national security and Army interest in the Middle East and Asia."

These officer evaluation reports were inaccurate. They did not present the facts about Hasan's character. In reality, Hasan was barely a competent psychiatrist whose radical views alarmed his colleagues.

In the Hasan case, both the FBI and DOD had important pieces to the puzzle that if put together could have possibly saved the lives of twelve soldiers and one civilian.

I want to personally express my sympathy to those impacted by the terrorist attack at Fort Hood. We should treat those who died and were wounded as brave Americans and award each a Purple Heart Medal.

When I spoke with the victims' families at the Fort Hood Memorial service, I saw firsthand the outrage and loss they felt and I want to help them find answers. But I want the answers to serve as a catalyst to affect change and improve our intelligence community as a whole so we can stop these attacks before they occur.

We look forward to hearing the witness testimonies to better understand what went wrong and how we can prevent such tragedies in the future.