

Republican Perspective

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By John Littig

Our *Un*-Armed Forces

On the bullet riddled window of the recruiting office there was a sign declaring it a gun-free zone. Why? Because a February 25, 1992 Defense Department policy directive effectively prohibits military personnel from carrying firearms on-post and at off-post military facilities. There's an exception for "personnel regularly engaged in law enforcement or security duties." This needs to change.

In the Fort Hood shooting on November 5, 2009, Major Nidal Hasan opened fire in the Soldier Readiness Center. Apparently unimpressed by the DOD directive against carrying firearms, the self-described "Soldier of Allah," killed 13 soldiers and wounded over 30 others. Since his targets were unarmed, Hasan had several minutes to fire without opposition until police could arrive and engage him.

On June 1, 2009, Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad (formerly Carlos Leon Bledsoe), armed with a rifle, fired upon unarmed Privates William Long and Quinton Ezeagwula at a Little Rock recruiting station. Muhammad killed Long and wounded Ezeagwula. He was arrested by local police, is now serving a life sentence, and has described his action as a "jihadi attack on infidel forces."

On July 16, 2015, Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez attacked a military recruiting office and, a few minutes latter, the Navy and Marine Corps Reserve Center in Chattanooga. Abdulazeez killed Gunnery Sergeant Thomas Sullivan, Staff Sergeant David Wyatt, Sergeant Carson Holmquist, Lance Corporal Skip Wells, and Navy Petty Officer Randall Smith. Personnel at both locations were defenseless; in fact, the recruiting office had a sign on the now-shattered glass proclaiming it to be a gun free zone. Local police engaged Abdulazeez and shot him to death.

In addition to these successful attacks on military facilities, many others have been foiled. Here are five. In May 2007, Mohammad Ibraahim Shnewer, Serdar Tatar, Dritan Duka, Eljvir Duka, and Sulayman Shain Duka were arrested and are now serving prison sentences for plotting to attack Fort Dix, NJ. In June 2010, Abu Khalid Abdul-Latif and Walli Mujahidh were charged with conspiring to attack a DOD facility in Seattle, WA; both pled guilty. In December 2010, Muhammad Hussain (formerly Antonio Martinez) was arrested and is now serving a prison sentence for attempting to bomb a recruiting station in Baltimore, MD. In June 2011, Yonathan Melaku was arrested and is now serving a prison sentence for shooting at the Pentagon and several other northern Virginia military facilities. In April 2015, Mohammed Abdullah Hasan was arrested for plotting to bomb Fort Riley, KS.

What to do? Well, it surely would not be a good idea to allow every Private, Seaman, and Airman to carry a loaded weapon at all times. Imagine the consequences of a drunken Saturday night fight at the on-post beer hall. On the other hand, wouldn't it make sense for officers and senior NCOs to be armed? Surely lives would have been saved at Fort Hood if one or more of the soldiers in the Readiness Center could have returned fire on Major Hasan.

In addition, off-post facilities such as recruiting offices need security. One solution would be to station armed guards at the facilities. However, the recruiters and others staffing those facilities are already weapons-trained and many are even combat veterans---a ready-made security force if only they were armed.

These attacks are likely to increase rather than abate. Using social media, the Islamic State has called on its "brothers residing in America" to attack our military and their families. It has even issued a "kill list" with the names, photos, and details of some 100 military members. *Stars and Stripes* reports that families on the list have been alerted.

It's a profoundly disturbing fact: our military is under attack---right here in America. They need protection. At a minimum, the 1992 DOD directive disarming them needs to be rescinded.