“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me”. Isaiah 6:8 (as is engraved on the hero bracelets presented to the survivors of the Fort Hood Massacre by the City of Killeen, Texas in November, 2009)

5 November 2009 is a day that will live in infamy for the families of the fallen, the wounded, and the survivors of the Fort Hood Massacre, while most Americans have long forgotten this national tragedy and remain far removed from the long trail of damages that remains. At 1:34 PM at Building 42003 on that fateful day, a US Army major and psychiatrist opened fire in the Soldier Readiness Processing Center, gunning down 43 defenseless Soldiers readying for or returning from wartime deployments, and one civilian physician’s assistant, a retired Army warrant officer. Thirteen innocents lost their lives, many of them charging the shooter to spare their fellow Soldiers and civilians, sustaining mortal wounds in the process of their heroic deeds.
Eyewitness statements indicate that after pausing to bow his head, the shooter, armed with an FN 5-7 pistol and a Smith and Wesson .357 magnum revolver, stood up, suddenly shouting, “Allahu Akbar!” (God is great), seconds before spraying a hail of bullets throughout the room and before taking direct aim at Soldiers in uniform, one a pregnant Soldier who pleaded for the life of her unborn child. In the ten minutes following and without regard for their own safety, dozens of Soldiers rushed to save the lives of the fallen and to remove them from harm’s way.

The shooter continuously reloaded his weapons as Soldiers dropped to the floor, desperately trying to escape, as he fired on them repeatedly; his goal to kill as many Soldiers as possible in support of his Islamic militant brothers. The systematic manner in which he attacked, maimed, and killed his fellow Soldiers personified what is considered true evil by the multitude of victims of these cold-blooded, vile acts of violence and hatred.

As the rampage continued outside the building, medical personnel dashed into the building 42003, secured the doors with a belt, and began rendering emergency medical treatment to the wounded and dying. Because the floors were covered with the blood of so many fallen Soldiers, it became impossible to reach many of them in time. As the shooter continued to fire at fleeing Soldiers outside the building, he was confronted by civilian police officer, SGT. Kimberly Munley, exchanging gunfire with her and striking her in the thigh and femur. As she fell to the ground, her weapon reportedly jammed and the shooter kicked it from her grasp. The shooter then encountered civilian police officer Mark Todd, who demanded that the shooter surrender, the exchange of gunfire unceasing. Firing five times at the shooter resulting in serious injuries, Officer Todd kicked the pistol from his hands, handcuffing him as he lost consciousness.

During the course of the deadliest mass murder on any military installation on American soil in US history, a combined total of 214 rounds were fired by the shooter and civilian police officers, who rushed to the scene, including 146 shell casings found inside the building and 68 in the area surrounding the SRP (Soldier Readiness Processing Center) Complex. When the massacre ended, medics retrieved 177 rounds of ammunition from the magazine-filled pockets of the shooter in both 20 and 30-round magazines.
As a result of a gunshot wound to the spine, the shooter is now a paraplegic. He was convicted of 13 counts of premeditated murder and 32 counts of attempted premeditated murder with a unanimous verdict by military court martial on 28 August 2013. The death sentence was handed down after less than two hours of deliberations by a panel of thirteen senior military officers. He will be the first active duty Service Member to be executed since 1961. Many lives have been shattered by the actions of this madman, to include the wounded, the families of the deceased, and those survivors that witnessed the horror of his acts, powerless to prevent them.

At the time of the dedication of the Fort Hood Memorial in March of 2016, the Department of Defense and federal law enforcement agencies have continued to classify the Fort Hood Massacre of 2009 an act of workplace violence by a disgruntled employee. All requests by the survivors and the family members of the slain to reclassify this mass execution as a terrorist act have been denied. Families also filed suit against the government in November of 2011, charging willful negligence in preventing the acts of the shooter for reasons of political correctness and compelling this reclassification as an unmistakable act of terrorism. In addition, on 5 November 2012, a wrongful death suit was filed against the US Government, the shooter, and the estate of Anwar al-Awlaki by 148 plaintiffs, including the victims of the massacre and their families, alleging violations of due process, intentional misrepresentation, assault and battery, gross negligence, and civil conspiracy. Al-Awlaki, considered a clear security threat to the United States by the FBI and the subject of several investigations by the Joint Terrorism Task Force because of his involvement in operational planning for the Islamic militant group, al Qaeda, had supported the shooter for his personal jihad against American Soldiers and blessed his acts against such military targets. The necessity of such legal proceedings has become a dagger to the souls of the victims of this rampage, as well as the grieving survivors and their loved ones, compiling accumulating trauma and wounds that will last a lifetime, stemming from this mass murder.

While the aforementioned legal actions are essential, let us never forget the enormously tragic toll that has transpired. As a result of this massacre, 12 Soldiers, one Army retiree, and one unborn child lost their lives. Eleven of these Soldiers died at the scene, two dying in the hours following the incident. A total of 33 Soldiers were wounded, not including the shooter. The chaos and carnage that marked this rampage will reside, for eternity, in the
souls of the wounded, the survivors, the family members, and the loved ones of the many lives so tragically and unnecessarily lost. And yet, in the recounting of this dreadful tragedy, let us never diminish or forget the gallantry, the courage, the strength of character, and the sacrifices, the valor, the heroism under fire of the survivors and of those whose lives were taken too soon. We must remember them with great pride and deference for all time, now and forevermore.

The 13 Fatalities

PA Michael Grant Cahill, US Army (Retired), 62, of Cameron, TX

MAJ Libardo Eduardo Caraveo, 52, of Woodbridge, VA

SSG Justin DeCrow, 32, of Plymouth, IN

Captain John Paul Gaffaney, 54, of San Diego, CA

SPC Frederick Greene, 29, of Mountain City, TN

SPC Jason Dean Hunt, 22, of Tillman, OK

SSG Amy Krueger, 29, of Kiel, WI

PFC Aaron Thomas Nemelka, 19, of West Jordan, UT

PFC Michael Pearson, 22, of Bolingbrook, IL

Captain Russell Seager, 51, of Racine, WI

Private Francesca Velez and Her Unborn Child, 21, of Chicago, IL

Lieutenant Colonel Juanita Warman, 55, of Havre de Grace, MD
SPC Kham Xiong, 23, of St. Paul, MN

The Wounded (by gunshot, though others sustained other than gunshot wounds and were not counted as victims of the Fort Hood Massacre, including SSG Joshua Berry of Cincinnati, OH, one of now 7 victims of suicide following this massacre)

SPC James Armstrong

PVT Amber Bahr Gadlin

SGT Patrick Blue III

SPC Keara Bono Torkelson

SPC Logan Burnett

SPC Alan Carroll

CPT Dorothy Carskadon

SSG Joy Clark

SPC Matthew D. Cooke

SSG Chad Davis

PVT Mick Engnehl

PVT Joseph T. Foster

CPL Nathan Hewitt

SGT Alvin Howard
PVT Najee Hull

SSG Eric Williams Jackson

PVT Justin Johnson

SSG Alonzo Lunsford

SSG Shawn Manning

SSG Paul Martin

2LT Brandy Mason

SPC Grant Moxon

SGT Kimberly Munley, Fort Hood Civilian Police

SSG Thuan Nguyen

SGT John Pagel

MAJ Randy Royer

SPC Dayna Ferguson Roscoe

Chief Warrant Officer Chris Royal

PVT Raymondo Saucedo

SPC George O. Stratton III

SGT Miguel Valdivia
SSG Patrick Ziegler

* (Military ranks were current at the time of the Fort Hood Massacre and do not include the shooter among the wounded. The shooter is now a paraplegic on death row at the US Army Disciplinary Barracks, Fort Leavenworth, KS)

In a matter of seconds, those of us undergoing processing for deployment or redeployment from the combat theater of operations witnessed heroism of epic proportions, as those who wore the uniform stampeded headlong into danger, their own lives rendered entirely meaningless.

This was our Valley of Death, a charge into the slaughter and certain death. This was about saving the very lives of our friends, rescuing those laying in waste at the hands of a madman, those who had long since become bonded as family. It is in times of war that little else matters than the salvation of those who will always have your back, as you will have theirs, regardless of any and all other considerations….and we would do so as our solemn oath. It is essential that we pay tribute, with great reverence, to those whose lives were so unnecessarily lost and whose absence remains so painfully noted, as well as to those exceptional and courageous individuals who, without hesitation, were so willing to make that same sacrifice.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”.

John 15:13

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References