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Neglecting Fort Hood Survivors Is a National Disgrace

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Brendan Smialowski—AFP/Getty Images Soldiers listen to the US national anthem during a memorial service at Fort Hood in Texas on April 9, 2014.

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Too many survivors don't have access to the benefits they need

Nearly seven years after the national tragedy of the Fort Hood massacre, little has changed. Despite the unveiling of the magnificent [memorial](#) in Killeen, Texas, on March 11 to pay tribute to the wounded and the fallen, this catastrophic event and its victims have been largely forgotten. Thirteen innocents lost their lives and more than 30 were wounded that day, gunned down by a self-proclaimed radical jihadist who advocated for the burnings and beheadings of his fellow soldiers.

It is long past due time for the truth to be disseminated across the land: The Fort Hood Massacre was unequivocally and indisputably an act of [terrorism](#). The Army prosecuted the shooter on

murder charges, not terrorism ones, and considered it the act of a disgruntled employee, even though the shooter had [messed](#) with a member of al-Qaeda before the attack.

Neglecting to call the massacre terrorism meant that it took almost six years for the U.S. to award Purple Heart medals to the victims and the families of the fallen. They were only awarded these medals last April after Congress [broadened](#) the requirements for recipients to include attacks where “the individual or entity was in communication with the foreign terrorist organization before the attack.”

At that time, Secretary of the Army John McHugh [agreed](#) to grant special compensations to the wounded in action and the families of those killed in action. To date, many of these endowments have yet to be provided in full. Furthermore, these special compensations will pathetically never be paid retroactively to the date of the Fort Hood massacre, but only to the date of the Purple Heart ceremony.

Some of the wounded have been obtaining medical treatment on their own dime, desperately trying to restore themselves to health and to find their way back to any degree of normalcy. And then there are the psychological wounds, which often remain unspoken and are often unlikely to ever heal. [Joshua Berry](#), a survivor of the massacre, suffered from post-traumatic stress and committed suicide in 2013. The Army should have [done more](#) to help him and others like him.

How much longer it will take for full benefits and entitlements to be delivered remains an unknown, egregious neglect. During the State of the Union Address in January of 2010, President Barack Obama, in front of God and country, promised SGT [Kimberly Munley](#), one of two civilian police officers to apprehend the shooter, that all of the wounded, herself included, would be fully restored to wellbeing. Munley, who was laid off due to budget cuts, has since said she has felt “[betrayed](#)” by how the Army treated the survivors. For shame, America.

We cannot afford to endure in downplaying the dangers inherent in these United States, as enemies rage within our borders and the escalating threat of radical jihadism produces no significant response. Nor can we ignore those who live the warrior ethos to protect and defend, and who make a solemn promise to willingly lay down their lives for every citizen of this nation and the freedoms we once cherished. Failing to do so constitutes a national disgrace.