



It is time to address the threat of radical Islam

By Rep. Mike Coffman

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When I enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1972, the United States was still entrenched in an ideological struggle with the nations and insurgencies who strongly held a shared allegiance to Marxist Communism and who listed the United States as their chief adversary. Today, the United States finds itself in an ideological struggle with radical Islam. This struggle is just as dangerous as the threat of communism once was during the Cold War.

This time, however, a political ideology has emerged that is fraudulently camouflaged within a religious tradition and is so twisted in its beliefs that it values death over life and uses terrorism as its only tactic.

Our leaders can no longer turn a blind eye to the growing threat of radical Islam. Without significant corrective action, we face the possibility of more attacks like the one at Fort Hood, Texas, in November of last year.

I can clearly remember as a young soldier being ordered to affirm, under oath, whether I was or had ever been a member of the Communist Party and whether I had any associations or sympathies with other related organizations that might call into question my allegiance to the U.S. government.

I was assigned to an armored division in Europe where an active counterintelligence operation made sure this enemy ideology never penetrated our ranks.

Just as the United States had previously recognized that it was in an ideological war with Marxist Communism, now it must come to terms with accurately describing the threat to our national security: radical Islam.

Unfortunately, our military, constrained by the Obama administration, has yet to do so for fear that it might offend the loyal adherents to the virtues of political correctness that has led this

administration to change “Global War on Terror” to “Overseas Contingency Operations” and “Terrorists Attacks” to “Man-Caused Disasters.”

Neither of these semantic changes, nor any other attempts at avoiding reality, has altered the fact that we are at war with radical Islam and that terrorism is their weapon of choice.

Also tellingly, three days after the massacre at Fort Hood, Texas, where 13 soldiers were killed and 30 were wounded, Gen. George Casey, chief of staff of the U.S. Army, stated, “Speculation could potentially heighten backlash against some of our Muslim soldiers and what happened at Fort Hood was a tragedy, but I believe it would be an even greater tragedy if our diversity becomes a casualty here.”

The U.S. Army’s “Final Report on Fort Hood,” released late last month, reflects the views earlier expressed by Gen. Casey by avoiding the role that radical Islam played in the killing of those 13 American soldiers.

The final report does recognize that the Army did not properly identify the internal threat Major Nidal Hasan posed before he killed 13 American soldiers, but, unfortunately, it falls short of identifying the significance of the threat that the radicalization of Muslims can pose within our military.

Because the Fort Hood Shooting Army Internal Review Team did not recognize and clearly address the threat of radical Islam, I believe it is further evidence of a failure of leadership.

To that end, I expressed these grave concerns with the Secretary of Defense in a letter on Nov. 19, 2010. In the letter, I called on Secretary Gates to take immediate action and update the Fort Hood report to accurately address this threat and detail what appropriate measures are necessary to counter it.

In 2005 and 2006 I served with the U.S. Marine Corps in Iraq where I met Muslim Americans who served our nation with distinction and were every bit as patriotic as other members of our military. I strongly believe that it would be in the best interest of not only our military but to Muslim Americans, in particular, to have a vigorous vetting process whereby members of our Armed Forces would have full confidence that all our service men and women could, at all times, be counted on.

The unintended consequences of the overly politically correct approach currently advocated by the U.S. Army will ultimately have the negative effect of only increasing the suspicions of Muslim American military personnel and thereby potentially causing increased alienation, segregation, and finally the radicalization of Muslim American personnel.

I strongly believe that the failure to classify radical Islam as an ideological threat to the United States led to the loss of 13 American soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas. If we continue down this path we will fail to develop the counterintelligence capability necessary to prevent future incidents from occurring.

It is time now for the American people to ask: How many more soldiers must be sacrificed at the altar of political correctness before our military changes course?

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