

**Ft. Hood Shooter Should Have Been Interviewed, FBI Official Says**  
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**By Jason Ryan**

A top FBI official testified today that Ft. Hood shooter Army Major Nidal Hasan should have been interviewed by FBI and Defense Department investigators before the deadly shooting based on reports from a field office about the major's activities.

FBI Executive Assistant Director Mark Giuliano appeared before the House Appropriations Committee to testify about an investigative report by former FBI Director William Webster over how the FBI handled intelligence information and communications between Maj. Hasan and Anwar Al Alawki, the now deceased American-Yemeni cleric who played an operational planning role for Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

"It's easy to go back and second guess. I believe an interview would have been prudent in this case," Giuliano told Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., chairman of the Appropriations Commerce-Justice-Science subcommittee.

"I am concerned that there were warning signs, and that with more aggressive investigation, there is a chance that this incident could have been prevented. I am further concerned that the reason for less-aggressive investigation may have been political sensitivities in the Washington Field Office, and maybe even the FBI's own investigating guidelines," Wolf said in his opening statement at the hearing.

The Webster report found shortcomings with FBI policies, technology and training in how FBI agents handled a review into Maj. Hasan before the Ft. Hood attack, which killed 13 and left 42 wounded.

Also revealed in Webster's report were concerns from FBI Agents on the San Diego Joint Terrorism Task Force who were investigating Awlaki who passed leads onto the FBI Washington Field Office (WFO) about Hasan's communications with Awlaki.

A task force agent wrote that "... WFO doesn't go out and interview every Muslim guy who visits extremist websites." The report cited of a paraphrased email from a Washington Field Office Agent to San Diego.

"Besides, this guy has a legitimate work related reasons to be going to these sites and engaging these extremists in dialogue. WFO did not assess this guy as a terrorism threat." The email cited in the report noted about Maj. Hasan who was conducting research on Islamic beliefs and military service at Walter Reed Medical Center.

FBI agents in Washington only conducted a cursory records check of Maj. Hasan and saw that he had recently been promoted and that officials at Walter Reed believed his research was significant. The agents also believed that tipping off Hasan may have jeopardized the investigation into Awlaki.

"I think San Diego actually felt that the Washington field office should have done more. They felt they needed to be more aggressive." Giuliano testified on Wednesday. "What did not occur and what should have occurred is it did not get pushed up the San Diego chain of command which I think would have pushed it up to [FBI] headquarters where we would have stepped back and most likely said we want an interview to be conducted."

Webster's review also noted that agents in San Diego recalled that someone in the Washington Field Office noted that the inquiry into Hasan was "politically sensitive for WFO."

"I personally do not believe political correctness had anything to do with this determination," Giuliano testified before the committee. "I don't believe political correctness — nor does the report believe political correctness was the reason for that."

"This was a judgment call. And unfortunately we make these judgment calls every single day, and we have to be right every single time," Giuliano told the committee. "As you look through it, an interview would have been prudent in this time. It's hard to tell whether it would have changed things."

Webster's review ultimately concluded that no one was responsible for mistakes in how the Hasan case was handled, writing to FBI Director Robert Mueller: "We do not find, and do not believe, that anyone is solely responsible for mistakes in handling the information. We do not believe it would be fair to hold these dedicated personnel, who work in a context of constant threats and limited resources, responsible for the tragedy that occurred months later at Fort Hood."

Awlaki who met two of the 9/11 hijackers at his mosque in San Diego became progressively more radicalized over the years, eventually playing a role in helping plan the failed Christmas 2009 underwear bombing plot of Northwest flight 253 and an attempt to bomb cargo planes coming into the United States in October 2010.

"[Awlaki] changed a lot over the years," Giuliano said. "When he went to prison in Yemen in '06, '07, and as he came out and came back up on line in early '08, Awlaki still had somewhat of a moderate tone — but began to be more of a propagandist, began to show more radical tendencies. We could not, and the IC did not, see him as operational or in an operational role at that time."

Giuliano also testified before the committee that the Justice Department decided not to prosecute Awlaki in 2002 when he was detained in New York returning to the United States from overseas. Giuliano said that although an arrest warrant has been issued by Diplomatic Security for passport fraud the US Attorney's Office in Denver decided they could not bring the case.

"So Awlaki did return in 2002. There was a Diplomatic Security Service — a DSS — warrant out for him. We knew Awlaki was coming back. We had information that he was coming back." Giuliano testified, "And the Colorado U.S. Attorney's Office looked at the warrant, looked at the factual basis for the warrant. It was not an FBI warrant, and it was dismissed simply because they did not feel they had the ability to prosecute Awlaki for the alleged passport fraud."

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