



Is Military Correctness a Weapon of Mass Destruction?

By
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Note: [this article](#) originally appeared in the 29 April 2010 edition of Air University's [The Wright Stuff](#).

Our enemies are adaptive and will develop systems and tactics that exploit our vulnerabilities
The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Report

Dictionary.com describes political correctness as being marked by or adhering to an orthodoxy regarding race, gender, sexual affinity, or ecology. An alternative definition says PC is being (or perceived as being) overly concerned with race, class, religion, gender and the likes to the exclusion of other matters. It's the *'to the exclusion of other matters'* part that should be of great concern, because that part of the definition carries with it a clear implication that PC thinking and behaviors cause us to lose track of what is truly important.

Has a militarized form of political correctness--military correctness--taken hold within the Department of Defense and the military services? If not, there's no problem. However, if military correctness has a pulse -- and my hypothesis, based on the evidence I see, suggests it does -- a second question is *does it create a detrimental effect?* If military correctness creates a detrimental effect, how big a challenge are we talking about and what can or should be done to mitigate the problem?

Arguably the most self-evident piece of military correctness regards the defense community's response after the Fort Hood, Texas massacre of Thursday, November 5th, 2009. The Fort Hood massacre resulted in 13 deaths and the death of an unborn child along with 30 others who were wounded.

Charged with the shootings and pending trial is Major Nidal Malik Hasan, who served until the time of the shootings as an Army psychiatrist. Discussing the shootings on the following Sunday's morning talk-show circuit, General George Casey, the Army Chief of staff said "It would be a shame--as great a tragedy as this was--it would be a shame if our diversity became a casualty as well."

Later, the Department of Defense investigated the event and in January 2010, released a report. The prime objective of the review was to determine if there were any systemic DoD weaknesses that put the health and safety of the department's people and their families at risk. The report, *Protecting the Force: Lessons from Fort Hood*, did not mention Hasan by name, nor did it address an important aspect of the massacre, Hasan's views on his Muslim faith.

Not associating Hasan with the event is easily understood from a criminal justice point of view in that his trial is still to come. However, regarding his faith, a radicalized faith, Hasan was in regular e-mail contact--it appears at least 18 e-mails were intercepted between December 2008 and June 2009-- with Anwar al-Awlaki, the imam associated with at least three 9/11 hijackers

and also the would-be Christmas Day underwear bomber. Since the massacre, al-Awlaki has praised Hasan as hero. Still, preceding that massive warning sign, Hasan not only displayed professional ineptness as a soldier and health care provider, but his speech and patterns of behavior were profoundly anti-American and he openly supported Islamic jihad.

It appears Army officials in Hasan's chain of command had concerns as early as 2005 that he was trending towards radical Islam. When Hasan's superiors were confronted with these reports, no known action of any significance was taken. Hasan's issues may have been run up the flagpole, but no one of authority saluted.

In meeting with the press, the lead investigators of *Protecting the Force: Lessons from Fort Hood*, Togo West and Vern Clark, said Hasan-type behavior is not rooted in Islam. "Suppose it were fundamentalist-Christian-inspired," said West. "Our concern is not with the religion. It is with the potential effect on our soldiers' ability to do their job."

The truth of course is that Hasan's religion appears to have dramatically impacted those who were injured and killed at Fort Hood. Beyond that, if such an event were fundamentalist-Christian inspired--of course it wasn't--why wouldn't it be addressed as such? Would that be out of bounds as well?

What does *Protecting the Force* say? Among other things it says that "Motivations for domestic terrorism are diverse, and include animal rights, environmentalism, nationalism, white supremacy, *religious causes*, and right-wing politics" (emphasis added). Still later, in February 2010, the Secretary for Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, said the Fort Hood massacre was caused by "Violent Islamic terrorism." So do the statements of Casey, West, and Napolitano need to be reconciled in any way? U.S. Senators Joe Lieberman and Susan Collins are concerned enough with the Fort Hood rampage (but not with military correctness, per se) that they have subpoenaed the Justice and Defense departments for information regarding the terrorism aspect of the case.

All that being said, hearken back to the definition of political correctness and consider that there are currently initiatives or reviews addressing green energy, Earth Day, smoking bans, women in submarines, Don't Ask Don't Tell, pagan worship centers, recruit obesity, hair and turban issues, and perhaps a number of others as well. Have DoD and the services become overly concerned with these types of issues *to the exclusion of other important matters* as the concept of military correctness would suggest?

The conflict formerly known as the Global War on Terror is now an Overseas Contingency Operation and the recently released Quadrennial Defense Review has no references to religion, jihad, or jihadists but mentions the phrase "climate change" almost twenty times. Does this serve as evidence of military correctness, or are they just extensions (or even improvements) in our thinking? Or is it some mixture of all these things?

It's often said the military is a reflection of the society it draws from. We know that societal political correctness exists and it seems certain that military correctness exists as well. While society in general mocks political correctness as a generally harmless joke, the Fort Hood tragedy shows evidence of the detrimental effect of military correctness with the effect of a weapon of mass destruction--the largest U.S. terrorism event since 9/11. The challenge regarding military correctness--and it is a great one--is what will we do?

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