



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on December 9, 2009

FBI Orders Review About Fort Hood Shooting

FBI Director Robert Mueller on December 8 ordered an independent review of the agency's handling of information pertaining to the military psychiatrist charged in the Fort Hood shooting. One particularly significant point for investigation is the shooter's e-mail communication with an anti-American cleric in Yemen.



Mueller asked William Webster, a former judge and former head of the FBI and CIA, to head the review of the bureau's procedures before the November 5 shooting that killed 13 people. Questions have been raised specifically about e-mails the accused shooter, Major Nidal Malik Hasan, sent to the cleric, Anwar al-Awlaki.

Al-Awlaki is known to have sympathies for al-Qaeda. Hasan's e-mails, which began in late 2008, were intercepted by U.S. intelligence and looked at by U.S. anti-terrorism officials. Investigators noted in November that the communications were deemed unworthy of a full investigation because they appeared to be related to Hasan's academic work and showed no clues that he was thinking about carrying out an attack or was receiving orders to do so.

The FBI has already taken heat for not detecting and averting the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the review could be another black eye for the bureau. It remains to be seen if Mueller's handpicking of Webster to lead the review will soften any critical findings. Mueller spoke only of his confidence in Webster.

"Judge Webster is uniquely qualified to undertake this task and look at the procedures and actions involved in this matter," Mueller declared in a statement. "It is essential to determine whether there are improvements to our current practices or other authorities that could make us all safer in the future."

The Defense Department has undertaken its own review of the shooting incident and the events leading up to it. No deadline has been set for Webster's review, though he is supposed to coordinate his investigation with that of the Defense Department.

President Barack Obama has stated that he would hold accountable those who failed to see the signs pointing to Hasan's dangerous tendencies. U.S. intelligence officials have already given him an initial briefing about how Hasan's case was handled prior to the shooting.

Hasan was born in the United States, though he is a Muslim of Palestinian descent. The charges brought against him include 13 counts of murder and 32 counts of attempted premeditated murder. Currently, he is paralyzed as a result of wounds he received in the exchange of gunfire that eventually brought his shooting spree to an end. Hasan is being held at a military hospital in Texas, and he could receive the death penalty if convicted.

There is no way to know if an investigation of FBI procedures will turn up the specific person (or



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persons) that are legitimately to blame for not catching Hasan's warning signs — or merely produce a scapegoat. It is very convenient for the FBI Director to be able to choose who investigates his own agency. Only time will tell if any more information is revealed that indicates Hasan could have been prevented from carrying out his deadly rampage.

Photo of FBI Director Robert Mueller: AP Images



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