



Photo by Staff Sgt. Joy Parlante, STB, III Corps

Marsha Gross, from Arlington, places flowers at the main gate of Fort Hood Sunday. Besides floral arrangements placed at the gate and outside the scene of the Nov. 5 shooting spree, thousands of e-mails and social media postings have been received by the Sentinel and the III Corps and Fort Hood Public Affairs Office.

## From the editor's desk

BY DAVE LARSEN  
Sentinel Editor

### Muslim mourns

Between the III Corps Public Affairs Office and the Sentinel, we've received hundreds of condolence letters, e-mails and social media postings this week from around the globe. The outpouring of support has been amazing to me. Here is just a small glimpse:

#### Troops treasured Down Under

My wife and I were stunned when our local TV ran the unfolding story of the shooting of troops on Fort Hood Base. We send our deepest condolences to the families of those who died, we pray for their souls. To the families of the wounded men, we both pray for their speedy recovery to good health.

When World War II broke out, I was about eight years (old). As a child, I remember the intense bombing we endured when I lived in Devonport, England. I remember vividly to this day the arrival of American troops in Devonport. For us children of Devonport it was an exciting period. The American troops were so kind to us. We needed America then, just as we need America right now to help us secure life in a better world.

The American people rose strongly from the ashes of 9/11, and so will the troops and their families of Fort Hood. Our prayers will be with them.

James and Joan O'Sullivan  
Queensland, Australia

#### Down range

I would like to express my deepest condolences to the families of the Soldiers and civilians who lost their lives or were injured during the awful tragedy that took place at Ft. Hood. The senseless loss of life in the hands of one of our own is something that deeply affects every servicemember, but especially those of us assigned to the Great Place. Our thoughts and prayers remain with them and the Central Texas and Fort Hood community.

Maj. Raul E. Maquez  
Balad, Iraq

The moment I heard the news of shooting and casualties at Fort Hood base, a silent prayer rose from the depth of my heart. O' God, let this NOT be an evil act by a Muslim. But my worst fear was realized.

The horrific nature of this carnage in a place where patriotism and service to our country is manifested at its highest level is what gets you. We pray for the departed souls and those who were injured in this dastardly incident.

I am glad that Muslim organizations have come out openly and have denounced (the shooting) without reservations.

But more needs to be done by Muslims. Much more in fact: both on individual and community level. I beseech my fellow Americans to view this act of violence at its individuality and not as some Islamic diktat.

Today, my grief is two-fold: as an American and as a Muslim. I hope my co-religionists are able to see their reflection in the innocent blood spilled at Fort Hood.

Abdul-Majeed Azad, Ph.D.  
Toledo, Ohio

Dr. Azad's concern that the Fort Hood shooting be viewed as an isolated incident rather than an act of terrorism by a religious fanatic mirrors that of the Army Chief of Staff, Gen. George Casey. Casey spoke about his concerns during media interviews with several Sunday morning talk shows last weekend.

"I'm concerned that this speculation could cause a backlash against some of our Muslim Soldiers," he told CNN's 'State of the Union.' "As horrific as this tragedy was, if our diversity becomes a casualty, I think that's worse."

We may never know the real reason why so many died and so many others continue suffering from the Nov. 5 tragedy. "Why" is the one thing we all may never know for certain.

But one thing is for certain, and Gen. Casey said it best: "Our diversity, not only in our Army, but in our country, is a strength." We should all remain Army Strong.

# Candlelight vigil honors dead, wounded from massacre on post

BY MICHAEL HECKMAN  
Sentinel Staff

For the estimated 300 people who participated in last Friday's candlelight vigil at Hood Stadium, the Nov. 5 slayings here were like losing a member of the family.

"They are our family," insisted Sylvie Keller, wife of Lt. Col. Charles Keller, who works at the Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center, where about 15 of the Soldiers seriously wounded in the massacre allegedly perpetrated Nov. 5 by a lone gunman who blazed away at fellow Soldiers waiting inside and near the post's Soldier Readiness Processing Center initially were taken.

Despite the best efforts of CRDAMC doctors and nurses, some of the shooting victims died at the hospital or were dead upon arrival. Forty-three others, including a police woman credited with taking down the shooter, were wounded.

The Kellers' children, Amber, 11, and Michael, 8, alternately wept with and were hugged by their parents.

"We're here to pray for the Soldiers and to support them," their father said.

Others in the crowd that huddled in the stadium's bleachers against a persistent breeze echoed the Kellers' sentiments.

"It could have been any of our Soldiers; it could have been my husband," said Jamie Anderson, another hospital employee who treated the victims.

Anderson is the wife of Sgt. Patrick Anderson, who is deployed to Afghanistan with Company B, 303rd Military Intelligence Battalion. She attended the vigil with her 4-year-old daughter, Solana, and her mother, Jo Ellen Freleigh, of New York.

"It means a great deal to me (to be here) since my daughter is part of the military family," Freleigh said.



Photos by Michael Heckman, Sentinel Staff

Lt. Col. Charles Keller, Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center, his wife, Sylvie, and their children, Amber and Michael, arrived early for a candlelight prayer vigil held Friday night inside Hood Stadium.

"I was honored to be out here."

After lighting their candles, Freleigh and Anderson blocked the wind so Solana could light hers.

Many struggled to understand what had happened.

Deadra Strawn, wife of Staff Sgt. Michael Strawn, 1-9 Cavalry Regiment, sat on the aluminum bleachers with her friend, Michelle Sparks. Her husband, Spc. Matthew Sparks, 1-12 Cav. Regt., is deployed.

When the shootings began, Deadra and Michelle were at the Clear Creek Commissary.

"When we heard the sirens going off we had no idea what was happening, so we went to my house (on post)," Michelle said.

"I woke up this morning and asked, 'Did that really happen yesterday?' You can't wrap your brain around it," Deadra said.

The military spouses discounted media reports that the alleged gunman may have had religious or political motives for the shootings.

"All I know is what we've heard in the media. I think you have to take it all with a grain of salt."

It was tragic regardless of his motivation," Michelle said. "Never

in a million years would I have imagined it would have happened on any post ... let alone here."

Retired Air Force meteorologist Jimmie Auten, 71, of Copperas Cove, attended the ceremony with his wife, Judy, and his father-in-law, Huber Kiker, 94.

The commander of a weather unit based in Thailand during the Vietnam War, Auten wore his blue Air Force jacket.

He said nothing similar had happened during his 21 years of service.

"It's just a reflection of the world we live in today, a world without Jesus. It's not safe anymore. Even in Thailand we didn't worry about things like this," said Auten, who currently is a Baptist minister and works with a coalition of area churches.

"It seems like it was a terrorist attack by one individual. I think faith is the only answer," he added.

Chief Army chaplain Maj. Gen. Douglas Carver told attendees to "remember to keep breathing ... keep going."

III Corps Chaplain (Col.) Mike Lembke led mourners in songs, including "Amazing Grace" and "God Bless America."

Addressing the crowd, he said, "The circumstances that bring us together are tragic, indeed. We have lost members of our community. We have wounded Soldiers. We have grieving people once again at Fort Hood.

"Grief is no stranger to the post's community," he added, "... yet we come together because we know it is the right thing to do. We know that to stand together, shoulder-to-shoulder as the Army family is the right thing to do."

Carver added, "All of you here in the Fort Hood military and surrounding communities have been in the hearts and prayers of military families around the world since the news broke yesterday ... our chapel communities worldwide are praying for God to bring restoration, to bring healing and to bring comfort to all of you who are mourning."



Jamie Anderson holds a candle for her daughter, Solana, 4, as her grandmother, Jo Ellen Freleigh, of New York, protects her candle from the wind. About 300 people attended the candlelight prayer vigil at Hood Stadium to honor those who were killed and wounded Nov. 5 when a gunman opened fire in the Soldier Readiness Processing Center on post.

## North Fort Hood conducts 'chem' light vigil

BY STAFF SGT. TONY M. LINDBACK  
Division West Public Affairs

Grieving Soldiers and family members came together for a twilight vigil at the North Fort Hood training complex Friday in remembrance of comrades and loved ones who were killed and wounded in the shooting tragedy at Fort Hood Nov. 5.

Substituting chemical lights for candles, the Soldiers paid tribute to their fallen comrades and those who remain hospitalized.

Maj. Gen. Charles A. Anderson,

commander of First Army Division West, offered condolences and shared his thoughts about the tragic event.

With anecdotal stories of past tragedies and the heroism and perseverance of the American Soldier, Anderson drew parallels between



Soldiers of the 1908th Medical Det., gathered with others at a nighttime vigil.

the World War II veterans and the servicemembers of today.

Anderson highlighted acts of heroism that emerged from the violence, and commended the acts of Pfc. James Armstrong, who helped get people out of harm's way despite having been shot twice.

Armstrong, a mental health specialist with the 1908th Medical Detachment, Combat Stress Control, was training at Fort Hood and preparing for deployment with his unit.

Bandaged and on crutches, Armstrong, and his wife, Roxanne, attended the vigil.

Before deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, many reserve component Soldiers train at North Fort Hood under the guidance and direction of the Division.

The division provides combat veterans to train and mentor U.S. Army Reserve and Army National Guard units, as well as specialized Air Force, Navy, Marine and coalition units. Some of the citizen-Soldiers Division West was training for deployment were in the Soldier Readiness Center when the shooting occurred.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Tony M. Lindback, First Army Division West Public Affairs

ABOVE, Soldiers gather at a twilight vigil held Friday at the North Fort Hood training complex in remembrance of comrades and loved ones who were killed and wounded in the Nov. 5 tragedy at Fort Hood. BELOW, First Army Division West Commander Maj. Gen. Charles A. Anderson speaks with Pfc. James Armstrong and wife, Roxanne, during a twilight vigil. Armstrong pulled others out of harm's way despite being shot twice himself.



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