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# DOD might hire more mental health professionals

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ARLINGTON, Va. — The Defense Department may hire more mental health professionals and other health care providers as part of its response to last year's shooting at Fort Hood.

Army psychiatrist Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan is accused of killing 13 people and wounding 29 others when he allegedly opened fire at the Texas base's Soldier and Family Readiness Center in November 2009. Afterward, Defense Secretary Robert Gates ordered an independent review into mental health issues as well as procedures of assessing personnel performance and facility security.

The Defense Department addressed some of the panel's recommendations in April. It responded to the rest on Friday.

"The demand for support from caregivers in general, and from mental healthcare providers in particular, is increasing and appears likely to continue to increase due to the stress on military personnel and their families from our high operational tempo and repeated assignments in combat areas," a follow-up review found.

Accordingly, the department may ask for health care providers in November, according to the response document. It did not say how many people might be hired.

The independent review also found that the Defense Department procedures for identifying warning signs of violent tendencies or radicalization are outdated, so the department will issue commanders and civilian supervisors interim guidance on how to identify internal threats.

Officials also will conduct three formal studies to "deepen our understanding of internal threats and refine guidance contained in the interim message," the response said. Those findings will become part of department programs by September 2011.

Another finding of the review is that pre- and post-deployment behavioral screenings don't catch all indicators of violent behavior. The assessments are based mostly on self-reporting, and the screening questionnaires typically only ask one question to see whether a servicemember might be a threat to others.

As a result, the Defense Department will adjust its guidance on mental health assessments to include a question about factors that could lead to violence, including a servicemember's work, home, financial and legal situation, according to the department's response.

The Defense Department announced 26 follow-up actions to the independent panel's review in April including a review of the military's "good order and discipline" policy after investigators found it did not address troops' relationships with potentially violent individuals, such as Hasan's alleged e-mail exchanges with a radical cleric in Yemen.

Also in April, the department promised new policies on how privately-owned guns can be carried or stored on base. The department's response on Friday said that interim guidance on privately owned weapons had already been issued, but defense officials could not confirm that by deadline.

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This article is uplifting and brings so much hope to those in the social work specialist series who work one on one with our soldiers. When you know you are doing your very best in up to 12 hour days and still there is a gaping hole in services, it can become demoralizing. I sincerely hope that this study does result in bringing on more dedicated social service employees. To look in the set of eyes across the desk from you, young tired eyes of a combat vet, and know that you can help them with their particular presenting problem is such a true blessing in your chosen lifetime career. You realize that you have truly been placed there for a reason - to make a difference and give something back to our young people and Our USA. God Bless the U.S. Army, TRADOC, USAAC and MG Donald M. Campbell, Jr., CG of USAREC, all who made a very special difference this past week with a USAREC wide Special Safety Day focused on soldier and civilian emotional health wellness. Thank you.

Written by Army1966, 23 August 2010 13:55

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