

VFW Urges Vigilance in the Wake of New Years Day Terror Attack

The following is a message from the VFW National Commander Al Lipphardt

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WASHINGTON — Like all of you, I was shocked at the news of the early morning ISIS-inspired rampage in New Orleans that senselessly took the lives of 14 innocent Americans and injured many more on New Year's Day. What makes this act of terror so egregious is that it was carried out by someone who once wore the uniform and swore an allegiance to our nation and to protect its people and its ideals.

As facts continue to surface about the assailant, it is apparent he planned and prepared to execute this unthinkable wickedness, indiscriminately destroying as many lives as he could and determined to die in violence. We have seen this type of self-radicalization before and often the descent into this level of madness was witnessed by those close to them. Could these incidents have been prevented? No one can say for sure. What this moment emphasizes is the need to check in on our brothers and sisters-in-arms. If there are indicators that they're heading down a path of destruction, we must make sure to get the authorities involved before they take a turn for the worse.

Even though this heinous act was committed by a former service member, he was inspired by ISIS, a foreign adversary that many in this country have lost sight of. He betrayed his country and sided with evil. He may have acted alone, but I don't think it far-fetched to assert there are others in this country who wish to inflict the same malevolence on our fellow citizens. While the death toll and numbers of those injured from this incident were one too many, it certainly would have been much worse if not for the heroism of the law enforcement officers on the scene who faced and eliminated the threat, saving countless other lives.

I want to be clear – the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) will always stand with the American people and our country against the scourge of terrorism, ISIS or otherwise. We did not fight to defend the United States for more than 40 years against violent extremists

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and terrorist organizations to see the nation succumb to them. We will be ever vigilant for those who want to harm our fellow citizens. If we see something, we will say something. Should a single terrorist or terror cell succeed in exploiting the moments Americans exercise their freedoms, we will be ready to render aid to victims by performing the lifesaving steps many of us were trained to do. We can be a force multiplier for our local first responders as well as sensors for state and federal levels of the Department of Homeland Security. While most VFW members may no longer be in uniform, we can still serve as we are able to.

No matter how dire the circumstances, the VFW will be ready to assist those in peril and are willing to stand in between America and those looking to terrorize it.