
VETERANS COALITION

F O R C O M M O N S E N S E

June 23, 2016

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Members of the United States Senate,

As veterans and dedicated servants of the national security of the United States, we closely follow development of terrorist threats against the homeland – and the response of our elected leaders to those threats.

Active shooter terrorism is increasingly a global concern – the attacks in Mumbai that killed 174 people at hotels and other landmarks in 2008, the Al-Shabaab sponsored massacre of 67 people at Nairobi’s Westgate Mall in 2013, and the two strikes in Paris in 2015 that left 12 and 130 dead, respectively, among many others.

ISIS both claimed responsibility for the attacks in Paris and sent a direct warning to the U.S.: “We swear that we will strike America.” Then, on Dec. 2, 2015, we saw the attacks in San Bernardino, which left 14 dead and 21 injured. Last week, an individual who had been investigated by the FBI for terrorist connections perpetrated the worst mass shooting in U.S. history.

In the face of such a threat, we are not doing everything we can to prevent future incidences of active shooter terrorism in America. In fact, to this day there persists in our laws a dangerous hole that allows suspected terrorists to legally buy firearms. For example, the federal government keeps something called the “no-fly list” that prevents potentially dangerous individuals from boarding commercial flights. However, while we have determined these people are too dangerous to fly, we allow them to buy guns. This loophole, termed the “terror gap,” is a vulnerability that Congress can easily address.

The implications of the “terror gap” are clear: it allows dangerous people to get their hands on guns. According to the Government Accountability Office, known or suspected terrorists have attempted to purchase guns or explosives from licensed gun dealers more than 2,200 times since 2004. They successfully obtained weapons 91% of the time.

As a group, we put service above politics. There is a bipartisan group of U.S. Senators that is doing the same thing. Led by Republican Senator Susan Collins of Maine and Democratic Senator Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, they have crafted a compromise bill that would prevent suspected terrorists on two lists, the no-fly list and the selectee list, from legally buying guns, while providing critical protections for due process of law.

Importantly, this legislation also protects the Second Amendment rights of law abiding, responsible Americans. Had this bill been law, the FBI might have been able to detect and stop the Orlando killer.

We request you vote “yes” on the Collins-Heitkamp compromise amendment. Thank you for your service in Congress and for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

Admiral Thad Allen, USCG (Ret.)
General Peter W. Chiarelli, USA (Ret.)
General Wesley Clark, USA (Ret.)
General Michael V. Hayden, USAF (Ret.)
General James T. Hill, USA (Ret.)
Admiral James M. Loy, USCG (Ret.)
General Stanley A. McChrystal, USA (Ret.)
Admiral Eric T. Olson, USN (Ret.)
General David Petraeus, USA (Ret.)
General William E. Ward, USA (Ret.)
Vice Admiral Lee Gunn, USN (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Mark Hertling, USA (Ret.)
Lieutenant General Russel Honoré, USA (Ret.)