

Seven US states to arm National Guard following Tennessee shooting

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The National Guard in seven US states is being armed with firearms following the killing of five guardsmen at a training center in Chattanooga, Tennessee last week.

Four Marines and one Navy petty officer were shot and killed July 17 at two different locations in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The suspected gunmen, 24-year-old Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez, was killed in a shootout with the police.

Responding to the attack, the Republican governors of Wisconsin, Indiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Florida, Louisiana, and Arkansas have all signed executive orders allowing the National Guard to carry weapons at recruitment centers and other National Guard facilities. Some of the states, such as Oklahoma, will select soldiers to carry concealed pistols. Other states such as Florida will issue guns to all full-time National Guard members if they do not already own one.

Governor Bill Haslam of Tennessee was criticized for not following suit with the arming of the National Guard. After the governor announced that he would seek security improvements at military recruitment centers, Republican state representative Joe Carr criticized the governor's "dithering." He stated, "We demand that you take all necessary measures to insure the safety and protection of our military personnel."

Federal law currently does not allow for the arming of non-National Guard military personnel at recruitment centers and other off-base locations. Leading military figures, however, have told the press that they hope to find a way to bypass the existing prohibitions.

Gen. Mark Milley, President Obama's nominee for the new Army chief of staff, told the Senate Armed Services Committee, "As far as arming recruiters go, I think that's complicated legally and there [are] issues involved... it certainly should be something we should

consider." Republican Senator John McCain asked Milley if he thought "the legal part of it can be resolved." Milley replied, "We should seriously consider it."

These comments were confirmed by current Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno. He told Fox News, "when it comes to recruiting stations... [w]e will look at every avenue arming them, there is some authority issues with that so we have to look all the way through that."

A bi-partisan bill introduced in congress Monday would allow domestic military commanders to decide whether military personnel could be armed with military-grade weapons. Republican representative Chuck Fleischmann from Tennessee told timesfreepress.com, "It allows base commanders to have the authority to allow military personnel to use their own personal weapons and be armed." He added that the law may be broad enough to include recruitment centers as well as other areas.

Fleischmann is not alone in proposing legislation easing restrictions on recruitment centers in the aftermath of the shooting. Republican Senator Jerry Moran from Kansas announced Monday that he would pursue legislation aimed at eliminating "gun-free zones" at recruitment centers and US bases. Moran stated, "If the members of our Armed Forces at the Chattanooga military recruitment centers had been allowed to exercise their Second Amendment Rights, the outcome of the attacks could have been very different."



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