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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, June 17, 2016

JUNE 18TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Why did this happen?

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Disbelief, horror, devastation, sorrow. As we saw the images and news unfold from Orlando, Florida this week it was hard not to feel some of these emotions. For me, I wanted answers, but I understand we don't always have the answers, and the answers given by those in Washington, DC often trying to rally partisans are hard to accept. However, it is hard to find a reasonable answer when someone so consumed by hate believes the murder of defenseless party goers, those out to dinner, or people taking in a sporting event is a way to make a societal or religious statement. The behavior defies reason and is rooted in evil. In the coming weeks and months we will learn more about who shooter Omar Mateen was, who he had communications with, who may have helped him and where he traveled and why - but what is clear already is that those who inspired him have a deep loathing for our country, our democracy, and our freedoms and liberties. We do know that Mateen was an American citizen, the son of an Afghan immigrant, born in New York City. However, there are thousands more like Mateen currently residing outside the U.S., many in the Middle East, wanting to do equal harm to those who live in the big cities, small towns and rural communities which make up our great nation.

That is what we know, but to me these are still incomplete answers because if we cannot feel safe here at home, other basic functions of our society and economy cease to matter or exist.

Admittedly, my own judgement is fueled by events of just the past year - the release of Guantanamo detainees back to the front lines to kill American soldiers, a dangerous nuclear deal with Iran, a spectacle of our own sailors forced to their knees, the failure to permanently dismantle and remove the threat ISIS poses, and a refusal to call the terror attacks from this week the actions of Radical Islamists. It is clear to me that the actions or 'inactions', of this President has made us less safe here at home and I firmly believe that. However, a rush to assign blame does not provide the strength that the families and community of Orlando need to move forward and that is what I believe we need most.

Our country is a great one, we believe in equal treatment under the law, in undeniable freedoms such as speech and religious liberty, we don't appoint our leaders we elect them, and while we may disagree with one another, we can do so without violence. Because of this there are people out there who wish to cause American's harm.

Those who inflict such terror direct their actions so that we see ourselves as they want us to be seen - weak, scared, inferior, and ultimately intimidated. Our partisan fighting only leads to the divide and allows the intimidation to continue, but standing strong in the face of tragedy, standing together as Americans, and supporting one another in communities across the country defies the terrorists of the intimidation they seek. Obviously it will not replace the pain, anguish, anger, or anxiety but it is an important reminder that we sometimes forget – we are all Americans and we have much to be proud of and a great deal worth fighting for, particular each other.

We need not let the acts of cowards like Omar Mateen intimidate us or change our day to day lives. But we are naive to think that this threat is simply going to go away without action on our behalf and without leadership prepared to do what is necessary to wipe those who inspire these actions from the face of the earth. America is home to many great things, but it doesn't need to be home to radicalized Islamic terrorists inspired by those who freely spew hatred for our country, cut off the heads of their enemies and target innocents for murder. We are the greatest nation on earth, founded on the grandest principles, and we should not be intimidated by those who want us to see ourselves as anything less.

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