

SCOTTSDALE - Earlier today, the Associated Press reported from Iraq that a U.S. soldier opened fire and killed five fellow American service members before being taken into custody at Camp Liberty in Baghdad. U.S Rep. Harry Mitchell, who chairs the Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations for the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, released the following statement in the wake of today's tragic event:

"Today's shooting is a horrible tragedy. My thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims. Today's events also underscore the critical need to provide and adopt a more proactive outreach operation to those suffering from the effects of combat stress and post-traumatic stress disorder. We simply cannot wait for our men and women serving in the military, or our nation's veterans transitioning back to civilian life, to come to us. We need to go to them. As we wait for additional details to come from Baghdad, we must ask ourselves this: Could this tragedy have been prevented? Our service members, veterans and their families deserve to know and deserve better than this."

The soldier who opened fire today was at a stress clinic where troops can go for help in dealing with the stresses of combat or for other personal difficulties [Source: [Associated Press, May 11, 2009](#)

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Mitchell has previously held numerous hearings on veteran suicides and mental health care, as well as suicide prevention and outreach. His efforts resulted in the VA's reversal of its earlier policy prohibiting the use television media to reach out to service men and women who suffer from mental health disorders when returning from war. [Source: "VA to Test Public Service Ads," [CBS News](#), July 14, 2008]