

Congressman Allen West
Statement for the Congressional Record
Reauthorization of Provisions of the Patriot Act
On May 26, 2011

Mr. Speaker: Deep within my heart I have a mistrust of the Obama Administration when it comes to the Patriot Act. However, I do have a greater trust in the law enforcement and judges on the FISA court to keep Americans safe.

I support the work that law enforcement does around the nation each and every day in order to protect our citizens and apprehend individuals who want to kill innocent people and try to destroy our way of life.

The Patriot Act was enacted shortly after September 11 to deal with the threat of international terrorism. Indeed, we are engaged in a global conflict against radical Islam. Those who are captured on this truly global battlefield should be treated as non-state, non-uniform belligerents, not as common criminals.

As you are well aware, I spent 22 years in the United States Army – the tip of the spear tasked with protecting the citizens of this great nation. As a Member of the House of Representatives, I have taken an oath to protect the constitutional rights of the citizens of the 22nd Congressional District of Florida and all Americans.

Benjamin Franklin, one of the founders of our nation wrote “they who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety.”

For many weeks I have reflected on this quote as I have studied this issue to make a decision on how I should cast my vote on the reauthorization of provisions of the Patriot Act. I have spoken with numerous individuals, including my fellow colleagues in the House of Representatives, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Robert Mueller, and the Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee Mike Rogers in order to try to understand the facts.

I have spoken to numerous constituents who are both experts on this issue and constituents who, while not experts, have a concern about these provisions. I reviewed testimony to Congressional Committees and have studied many documents in order to determine the proper balance between individual’s rights and the responsibility of the Federal Government to protect Americans.

I have done what I was sent to Capitol Hill to do, to make an informed decision based on the facts and represent the people of the 22nd Congressional District of Florida. I have determined that the most important constitutional right, one which I have taken an oath to protect, is the

right to life for all Americans. We must do whatever is necessary to prevent another terrorist attack on our soil.

When we killed Osama bin Laden, we may have killed the face of evil and the mastermind of numerous terrorist attacks, however, we face an embolden enemy who now operates on a 21st Century Battlefield. The perpetrators of September 11th lived in South Florida and planned their attacks upon our nation. And just this month, individuals were arrested in South Florida sending funds to terrorists in Pakistan.

The complexities of the 21st Century Battlefield require us to reassess and redefine how we confront our enemy. The men and women who serve in law enforcement throughout our country today face this non-state, non-uniform belligerent who has no regard for international borders or boundaries, to include our homeland. As we have seen by the terrorist attacks in Little Rock and Fort Hood, our fight against radical Islam is not just against the Taliban in Afghanistan or al Qaida in Iraq, but against a global movement who has infiltrated our borders.

We are at war with a radical ideology that has brought the fight to us time and time again. From Fort Hood, Texas, to Little Rock, Arkansas, Islamists have targeted American citizens. After each of these brutal attacks, I, like many Americans, was shocked at how this could happen on American soil. Political Correctness allowed Major Nidal Hassan to have so-called "spiritual conversations" with a radical element who preached and advocated violence against American citizens. Under the protection of the First Amendment, Carlos Bledsoe was able to travel overseas become radicalized return home to purchase weapons, plan and execute an attack against a Little Rock Army Recruiting Depot.

As I outlined to a letter I sent to FBI Director Robert Mueller earlier this month, I believe the execution of these provisions should be moved to the Counter Terrorism Division instead of the Criminal Division. Further, I do not support the extension of these provisions for four years and I am gravely disturbed that we did not allow an open process to review the extension of these provisions.

We must clearly focus on the enemy, not permit political correctness to drive our domestic security policy. No one recognizes the security situation better than I. However, I have not been fully persuaded that these provisions make us safe... as opposed to the illusion of feeling safe.

Based upon my research, I shall not vote for extending these provisions for four years. The most integral part of our focus on security against radical Islamic terrorism is to openly debate, recognize, and confront this enemy.