



North Albany Post 1610

American Legion

35 North First Street, Albany, New York 12204

January 4, 2010

Dear Legion Family Member and Friends,

Well winter is here and but spring is just around the corner. Try attending some of our meetings with your busy schedule. The next regular meeting will be held on **January 18th at 7:00 PM**. The February executive board meeting will be held on Monday, February 1st, at 7:00 PM and the February regular meeting will be held on February 15th, also at 7:00 PM.

BOMBS NOT AWAY

A'stan rules put troops at risk

By NOAH SHACHTMAN (WIRED & NYPOST)

As part of his push to win over the people of Afghanistan, top US Gen. Stanley McChrystal in July abolished air attacks in all but the most dire of circumstances. But that ban is having all kinds of ugly and unexpected consequences.

US troops are paying a tough price for it. Consider the running firefight that Echo Company of the 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines faced in the town of Mian Poshteh in late August.

For 36 hours, the local Taliban did everything they could to kill the Marines of Echo Company. The militants planted improvised bombs. They fired mortar rounds at the adobe compound where the Marines were holed up. And when most of the Americans left to get fresh supplies, the Taliban attacked from three sides, while a sniper took aim at the troops' heads.

The Marines, on the other hand, had to hold back.

Sure, they could return fire, launching rockets and artillery and Cobra helicopters at the militants. But for a day and a half, Echo Company had no effective access to the most powerful weapons in the US arsenal: bombs dropped from the sky.

McChrystal's goal was to eliminate the innocent deaths that the Taliban have turned into propaganda victories. But his cautious rules of engagement are not only putting more US troops at risk by taking away America's most potent advantage in this conflict, they've sidelined the tools and processes most likely to keep air strikes from killing innocents.

Which means units like Echo Company aren't the only ones in greater danger by waging this supposedly more careful air war.

Air campaigns once had a reputation for reckless brutality: the torching of Dresden, the carpetbombing of Vietnam, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But things have changed: Satellite-guided bombs can now be directed into the particular window of a particular building, instead of thrown haphazardly out of the back of a plane.

Air Force "weaponeers" run sophisticated computer models to predict what will happen when a particular bomb strikes a particular building at a certain angle. "Targeteers" scour huge terrain databases for mosques or schools. Spy drones watch battlefields to make sure that militants are really around -- and that women and children aren't.

Bombs still go astray, of course, with terrifying consequences. But this system for employing air power is so precise, even Human Rights Watch praises its "very good record of minimizing harm to civilians."

Too bad it's hardly used any more.

Air strikes need to be planned ahead of time, to take advantage of these tools. It takes time to watch silently through a drone's eyes, pore through those databases and run the simulations. Under McChrystal's rules, getting advance approval for an air strike has become so cumbersome that hardly anyone bothers any more.

Ground commanders now need to provide the top brass with multiple sources of intelligence showing that a bombing will strike only militants and not civilians, proof that there's no other way to go after a target and even a plan to justify the bombing to the locals. Not surprisingly, these requirements rarely come together.

Over the summer, I talked to one Marine captain who had a building full of bombs cordoned off; he still couldn't get approval to blow the place up. When I visited the Air Force's targeteers, they were bored stiff -- they hadn't worked on a serious strike in weeks.

These days, the only reliable way for a ground commander in Afghanistan to get air support is to declare "troops in contact" -- soldiers or Marines under fire. That's supposed to be an urgent cry for help. But it's come to mean . . . well, almost anything.

I've seen TICs "opened" because rockets were fired in the general vicinity of a large base; the immediate danger to Coalition forces was negligible. Meanwhile, units like Echo Company have grown so used to gunfights that they sometimes won't even bother reporting a TIC -- even though the Taliban are shooting right at them.

The Air Force says it's working on a fix. But over the last year reporting on the air war, I watched TICs stay open for nine hours, even though bullets stopped flying hours earlier. At the other extreme is the dangerous situation Echo Company faced in its 36-hour siege.

For a day and a half, those Marines were locked in a firefight with militants they could barely see. They desperately needed a spy drone to watch for the Taliban's approach, and they needed the "air option" to level that sniper's perch. Instead, the Marines got air cover only when bullets were flying in their direction. As soon as the lead stopped, the planes and helicopters went away.

According to the twisted system for allotting air power under McChrystal's rules, the siege was just a series of unrelated TICs. Eventually, a Harrier jet zoomed over Echo Company's battle: The bosses had given their approval to drop a 500-pound bomb. But by then it was too late -- the Taliban sniper was gone.

McChrystal's guidelines have reduced collateral damage: Accidental civilian deaths dropped by 87 percent over the eight weeks following his order. But the toll on US forces has been brutal: Last month, 32 US troops died in Afghanistan -- nearly triple the number from November 2008.

America can't bomb its way to victory in Afghanistan. That's not how people are persuaded to turn against local thugs. But even with 30,000 more US troops on the way, it's an open question whether the war can be brought to a successful conclusion without the option to freely strike from above.

Still Amiss in Afghanistan (The following is an opinion follow-up to previous story)

* Afghanistan has become another Vietnam. We're fighting the war from the United States and on PC terms to bring our troops home ("Bombs Not Away," Noah Shachtman, PostOpinion, Dec. 22).

President Obama sent a little more than half of the troops his generals asked for. Now he's going to tie their hands with his rules of engagement?

It's a shame when civilians die. We should know here in the United States; we lost a lot on 9/11.

Sam Lumia
Whitestone

* Why is Gen. Stanley McChrystal fighting a war? To babysit for the Afghan people?

His troops are like sitting ducks. If he doesn't like the way he has to fight a war, he should tell that to Obama and either quit or get out of there.

We can't be dictated to by other countries on how to fight our war. These are our troops who are fighting.

We can't have political correctness and Miranda rights in wartime.

Obama is all wet when it comes to defending our troops and our country. After telling everyone how sorry we are for what we have done, he then sends troops to Afghanistan and tells them not to hurt anyone because we don't want to look bad to the friendly dictators.

Bob Tornese
Yonkers

* As a veteran, all I can say is thank God I'm not in this war in Afghanistan.

With a president who wants to win by giving the enemy lollypops, and a general who won't use air support, these soldiers are doomed.

Collateral damage is part of war; just ask anyone who lost a loved one on 9/11.

Joe Depascale
Brooklyn

VETERAN ACTIVITIES

HONOR-A-VET

January's Honor-A-Vet ceremony will be held Monday, February 1st at 8:30am in the Cahill room, 1st floor of 112 State Street.

POST INFORMATION

FOOD PANTRY

Sacred Heart Church food pantry needs your help, we have a collection box in the post for your convenience.

AUXILIARY

As 2009 comes to a close, we'd like to thank all that have supported our many projects and fund-raisers. Without you we would not be able to help as many veterans as we have.

I hope everyone had a happy and memorable holiday season with family and friends. The Auxiliary will be planning a few more events during winter and spring and hope some of you can plan to attend our meetings to help. We have started planning a visit to the Walter St Vet House in February. Bingo resumes on Jan. 18th.

Just a reminder, our meetings are at 7:00 pm on the first Tuesday of each month. Hope to see some new faces. If you have any family members or friends eligible for membership, please encourage them to join us. Dues are only \$16.00 a year and the rewards are too numerous to mention.

If you do not have a membership card that says 2010, your dues are due now. Please mail your check to Debbi Heritage, One Birch Tree Rd, Albany, NY 12205. If you are not sure if you have paid, just give her a call at 437-0811. She can also send you application forms for anyone interested in joining. Dues can also be dropped off at the Post bar. Membership is our life blood. Without new members our organization will not be able to continue. We need your help in spreading what we are all about and how important our organization is in making sure our veterans and their families get the help, **and support they deserve.**

WEB PAGE

The Post web page can be accessed at <http://www.northalbanypost1610.org/>. Among other information, the monthly newsletter, Post history, meeting schedules and current activities are posted on this site.

BARTENDERS NEEDED!!!!!!!

Mick Ryan Here! We Need Bartenders, Will Train. If you drive by the post and notice that the lights are off, it is due to lack of help in keeping the place running, we need some people for filling in. Anyone interested call 465-4800 and leave a message for Mick.

MEMBERSHIP

We are in need of **NEW MEMBERS**, please send us anybody that you know that may be interested and qualified. We have 230 paid members to date, our goal is 319. All members should remember that 2010 dues are now \$30.00 for a regular membership or \$27.00 if you are age 62 and retired. Retirees should disregard the national dues notice indicating \$30.00. Those notices for 2010 dues were in the mail. We do appreciate those that send their dues in promptly. **Active duty personnel** should email nap1610@yahoo.com so we can now that if you are active or not, when verified your card will be sent out within a couple of weeks.

Members confined to home due to a long-term illness or nursing, assisted living residences should contact the Post at 465-4800 or email nap1610@yahoo.com to indicate their present status.

**POST EVERLASTING
WILLIAM PRIME
ALBERT F. PATTERSON**

For God and Country,

Mike Swezey, Commander

Mike Swezey, Commander	783-9409H, 462-8304O, 330-3938C	mike_swezey@ml.com
Charles Johnson, 1 st Vice Cmdr	465-4800	
Joe Ferraiolo, 2 nd Vice Cmdr	209-2762C	
Roy Van Amburgh, 3 rd Vice Cmdr	465-4800	
William Parker Jr., Adjutant	533-8140C	nap1610@yahoo.com
William Parker Jr., Membership	533-8140C	nap1610@yahoo.com
Matthew Quackenbush, Service Officer	465-4800	mquacken@verizon.net
Harry Harbour, S.A.L. Commander		harry.harbour@albanycounty.com
Judy Benner, Auxiliary President	869-8668	jbenner1@nycap.rr.com
Rentals	465-4800 (Answering Machine)	
Post Bar & Information	465-1402	nap1610@yahoo.com
Post Fax	518-320-0589	
Post Web Page	http://www.northalbanypost1610.org/	
Chuck Kelly, OIC Color Guard	465-4800	