

The Lavelle Affair

Your article in the February 2007 issue [*"Lavelle, Nixon, and the White House Tapes,"* p. 82] is not fair to former Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John D. Ryan or to our commander in Vietnam, Gen. Creighton Abrams. It was certainly true that in my meetings with Gen. John Lavelle I told him that my order on "protective reaction" should be viewed liberally. I invented the term "protective reaction." Prior to my order, there was no authorization (under McNamara or Clifford) to destroy dangerous targets except when fired upon without special permission. Gen. Bus Wheeler, Adm. Tom Moorer, and Gen. Abrams all agreed with the liberal interpretation on my order on protective reaction. The new orders permitted hitting anti-aircraft installations and other dangerous targets if spotted on their missions, whether they were activated or not.

General Ryan, as Chief of Staff of the US Air Force, expressed great displeasure with General Lavelle and was, indeed, upset when he came to my office after he found out that General Lavelle perhaps encouraged pilots, if not directed them, to lie about the coordinates on some of their missions. I can assure you that no one instructed General Lavelle to falsify any reports. One cannot permit the falsification of records in any military command. I have no regrets in supporting General Ryan, even though I admired General Lavelle as a fine gentleman with an otherwise great Air Force record. I can assure you that President Nixon never asked me to approve of any falsification of records by any officer in the US military.

Melvin R. Laird
Washington, D.C.

■ *Mr. Laird's statement that "new orders permitted hitting anti-aircraft installations and other dangerous targets if spotted on their missions, whether they were activated or not" confirms the fairness and accuracy of our article. Although 35 years late, Mr.*

Laird's admission fully vindicates the truthfulness of General John D. Lavelle before the United States Congress.

Moreover, there is no evidence to support Mr. Laird's suggestion that General Lavelle encouraged or directed pilots to lie about coordinates on missions or falsify reports. At this point, the only remaining issue of veracity relates to the under-oath statements by senior officials of the Department of Defense to the United States Senate.—ALOYSIUS AND PATRICK CASEY

The Jointness Syndrome

I found Gen. Norton A. Schwartz's response [*in "Letters," March, p. 4*] to Rebecca Grant's "The Billy Mitchell Syndrome" [*December 2006, p. 52*] very interesting. I know him to be a thoughtful officer and have long held him in high regard. Nevertheless, he has misinterpreted the intent of the quote attributed to me. I was then (1997), and remain today, concerned that a careless application of "jointness" can result in unnecessary friendly casualties. But the quote in Ms. Grant's article is about the difficulty airmen face in convincing critics that the Air Force is "joint" in the best sense of the concept. Jointness is not about the Air Force supporting the Army; it is about the Army and the Air Force supporting the joint force commander. Often, the joint force commander will wish to employ air force capabilities in ways that achieve objectives at lower

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Publisher

Donald L. Peterson

Editor in Chief

Robert S. Dudley

Editorial

afmag@afa.org

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Suzann Chapman

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Walter J. Boyne, Bruce D. Callander,
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Production

afmag@afa.org

Managing Editor

Juliette Kelsey Chagnon

Assistant Managing Editor

Frances McKenney

Editorial Associate

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Heather Lewis

Designer

Darcy N. Harris

Photo Editor

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Butch Ramsey

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Chequita Wood

Advertising

adv@afa.org

Advertising Director

Patricia Teevan
1501 Lee Highway
Arlington, Va. 22209-1198
Tel: 703/247-5800
Telefax: 703/247-5855

Industry Relations Manager

Patricia Teevan • 703/247-5800

US and European Sales Manager

William Farrell • 847/295-2305
Lake Forest, Ill.
e-mail: BFarr80708@aol.com



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Letters to Editor Column..... letters@afa.org

Eaker Institute..... eaker@afa.org

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(example: jdoe@afa.org)

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costs than might be expected from direct land force engagements ("close with and destroy") supported by air. The Army's failure to recognize the value of independent (in direct support of joint force commander objectives) application of air force capabilities has inhibited the development of true jointness for over 60 years. This myopic land force advocates' view has survived by pointing the finger of "parochialism" at airmen who are most interested in saving soldiers from the rigors and dangers of close combat.

I join General Schwartz in applauding the command sergeant major on the ground who could have demonstrated his eagerness for contact by assaulting the farmhouse but chose instead to rely on airpower to assure ultimate success in the mission. Here again, I believe General Schwartz missed Ms. Grant's point. She was lamenting the absence of airmen willing and able to articulate the value of this special application of air and space capabilities. This was not traditional close air support in which air capabilities are harnesses to a land force intent on closing with the enemy. This was a superb example of land and air capabilities harnessed more directly to the joint force commanders' mission. I admit that this difference

may seem somewhat arcane—but comprehending it is key to ensuring that we (land and air forces) can do it again—routinely. We have to talk about it in order to broaden understanding and appreciation—and to underwrite future resourcing and the development of doctrine. Again I agree with General Schwartz—we want more of this kind of jointness. But we won't get it without talking about it.

General Schwartz's admonition to "emphasize contribution over attribution" is well phrased. In the end, those in charge of the distribution of resources (defining all of our futures) must be informed. In our system, they are informed through a process of advocacy in which specialists in the military use of the land, sea, air, and space mediums describe and advocate for the best use of their particular capabilities in achieving joint force objectives. Indeed, as I argued for better appreciation of airpower capabilities against surface forces in the roles and missions discussions of the 1990s, I was often criticized for my "parochial" views. As it turns out, had I been a more effective advocate, the Army might have been able to spend the money wasted on deep attack helicopters (a capability already aptly demonstrated

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by fixed-wing airpower) on armor for soldiers and Humvees.

Finally, I am very grateful to General Schwartz for his willingness to put his valuable thoughts into this vital discussion. Sadly though, I must reflect that the thrust of his message may just be making Ms. Grant's point in yet another way.

Maj. Gen. Charles D. Link,
USAF (Ret.)
Vienna, Va.

[I wish to address] Gen. Norton A. Schwartz's comment regarding Dr. Rebecca Grant's Billy Mitchell story. General Schwartz wrote that Grant "expresses views on airpower advocacy which are blissful, nostalgic, ... and wrong."

As a WWII type, I'm shocked to see that naiveté has reached the highest level of USAF. Not only Billy Mitchell, but Frank Andrews, Hap Arnold, [Carl] Spaatz, and many more are wondering what's gone wrong. Looks like an agonizing reappraisal is in order for USAF leadership.

Brig. Gen. Richard M. Baughn,
USAF (Ret.)
Austin, Tex.

One of the highlights of my career was working for then-Col. Norty Schwartz at the Air Staff in the mid-90s. I owe a lot to his leadership and mentorship. The publishing of Grant's flippant non-response to his letter in the [March] issue is beneath the dignity of your magazine.

Col. Rich Smith,
USAF
Syracuse, N.Y.

Battle of the Boots

I am writing in regard to the recent editorial by Robert Dudney [*"Editorial: The Battle of the Boots," March, p. 2*]. Once again, we find the ugly argument being raised about who gets the lion's share of the budget. While I will be the first to praise the US Air Force on its outstanding accomplishments, I fail to understand the apparent resentment to increasing the size of the US Army and the Marine Corps. While China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran certainly loom large as potential foes, I disagree that future policy should revolve around plans for a major war with any of these countries.

More and more, the realities are

that the enemies of the US will fight the types of asymmetric warfare the US public has the least willingness to fight. It will be a battle of suicide bombers, terrorists, and dedicated fanatics against the most vulnerable types of targets—civilian populations. In this type of battle, you can field a thousand F-22s and you will not be able to protect someone going to the grocery store. That type of security evolves from having soldiers in place and patrolling the streets, showing a presence every day and every night. It will be rooting out these enemies in their caves, homes, and villages—not the job for \$360 million aircraft.

Tactical doctrine that requires identifying that enemy's "centers of gravity," where the Air Force can be most effective, is least useful in the type of asymmetric warfare the US is most likely to become involved in. We need only think of Bosnia, Somalia, Afghanistan, and potentially Darfur. Maybe these are more correctly identified as "Operations Other Than War," but most likely someone will be shooting at someone else.

I think the Army and Marine Corps have certainly shouldered a very heavy burden in Iraq and anything that can help ease that burden only strengthens the security of the United States.

Michael Kordus
Yardley, Pa.

Reference your article "The Battle of the Boots": I have trouble with it on a couple of levels.

[First, concerning] budget restrictions: Our forces were cut about 45 percent during the 1990s (during the Clinton Administration) as a "peace dividend" after the Cold War, and now we are finding ourselves inadequate [at insufficient strength] for the missions assigned. We are the guarantors of freedom for all of the free world, a responsibility acquired at the end of WWII. If we abdicate that responsibility, we do so at our own peril and that of the entire free world. God knows what future military requirements we will face; unfortunately, we do not. So responsible planners should err on the side of strength and not expand one service at the expense of another—world leadership has a price.

[Secondly, regarding] public support and anti-war movements: Is it any wonder that average Americans are growing tired of the war? Not if one looks at the daily bombardment of negative coverage given by the liberal/biased anti-Bush news media. How can they conclude anything else? Americans

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need to hear the consequences of not spending more now to modernize and expand our forces, thereby insuring that we don't lose our national identity, our free enterprise capitalistic economic success, and our form of government. Senior military leaders and political leaders, other than the current crop of defeatists, should be on the stump at every opportunity to talk about the unacceptable alternatives. There will be no entitlement programs (Social Security, Medicare, etc.) if we do not prevail in this current conflict. [The enemies] have a very long-term

plan and the patience to go with it; they want us dead. History is full of successful examples of early action with a smaller expenditure of treasure and lives, as opposed to waiting and paying a large price later. President Bush is steadfast and right about the significance of the war in Iraq, and military/political leaders need to energize themselves to be more vocal about the consequences of defeat in their public pronouncements.

Budget restrictions are nothing new in military planning, but they have never been more [threatening to] national

survival than they are at this time. If a \$20 billion (or \$40 billion) annual increase is what it takes we, as a nation, need to get on with it and mount a campaign to overcome the negative peace-at-any-price media. Are you listening, Congress?

Maj. Gen. L.W. Svendsen Jr.,
USAF (Ret.)
Garden Ridge, Tex.

The Fighter Force We Have

I have been reading with great interest the numerous articles regarding the aging of the Air Force aircraft fleet. John Tirpak's recent article presented a knowledgeable and informative account of how the Air Force is addressing the aging fighter force [*"Making the Best of the Fighter Force," March, p. 40*]. Since funding of new and upgraded aircraft is a somewhat divisive issue among the services and with and within DOD, I would like to clarify a statistic that Mr. Tirpak used. He states, "The F-16 was expected to fly about 250 hours a year, on average, but those deployed to combat have averaged 300 hours per year or more. Put another way, that means the most heavily used Falcons are aging at the rate of five years for every four in service." Since his premise is based on "average" use, I feel his conclusion also should be based on average use rather than "most heavily used." This would change the conclusion to read the average Falcons are aging at the rate of six years for every five years of service, a somewhat less stressful figure.

Thanks for keeping the issue of the aging fleet in the forefront. You are doing a great job.

John Stanley
San Antonio

Bird Dog Hero

I certainly can agree that those intrepid pilots who supported those of us on the ground were truly heroes. The story of Capt. Hilliard Wilbanks' heroism [*"Bird Dog's Last Battle," March, p. 50*] brought back memories of heroic actions taken by our forward air controller down in the Delta in 1968. Capt. Bill Paquin (who I believe was a B-52 pilot who volunteered to serve as a FAC) was based in Bac Lieu Province. He and I shared a room in an old French villa with the advisory team. Bill was the epitome of the type of pilot you describe in the Wilbanks article. One day in mid-1968, Bill was flying in support of a Regional Force/Popular Force operation south of Bac Lieu City in Gia Rai District. As the operation unfolded, the small unit was surrounded by a larger VC force

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and the American advisor called for air support. Unfortunately attack aircraft from Can Tho were en route but could not get there soon enough as the Viet Cong were on line and assaulting the small unit which was exposed in the middle of a rice paddy. Bill recognized that a delay would place the entire unit in jeopardy, so he made several runs on the VC lines firing up his WP rockets. These runs disrupted the assault. When he was out of rockets, he then made a couple of very low passes firing his rifle out of the window of his Bird Dog until he was shot in the legs through the floor of the aircraft. He then was forced to break off his attack and return to base for medical attention.

Captain Paquin's actions that day saved the small unit and enabled the troops to repel the VC. For this bravery in action, I believe Bill was recommended for the Silver Star and I firmly believe it was well deserved. My hat's off to all of the Air Force pilots who served and helped those of us who fought on the ground.

Col. Dick Williams,
USA (Ret.)
Belleair Beach, Fla.

A Thousand Words

A picture is worth a thousand words, and the picture painted by *Air Force Magazine's* "Chart Page" in its March 2007 issue on p. 10 is no exception [*"That Giant Droning Sound"*]. The UAV flight hours chart and UAV aircraft numbers table might end up costing the Air Force more than a thousand words. According to the charts, the Army flew more UAV flight hours than the Air Force in 2006, and this is without counting small UAVs. Also, it looks like between 2002 and 2006 the Air Force increased its UAV inventory from 28 to 107 while the Army went from 65 to 290.

In today's joint environment, should the Air Force even be concerned with these trends? It should if it wants to run the UAV show or thinks it should. In the past, the Headquarters United States Air Force has argued for becoming the executive agent for UAVs. That argument will be hard to make until the day the Air Force operates more UAVs and for longer flight hours than its "nonflying" sister services.

Granted it is all about the effect provided by the platforms more than the platforms themselves. However, in the halls of the Pentagon sometimes perceptions shaped by raw data actually guide decisions. And in this case the "giant droning sound" will be the perceived whining of the Air Force to be the "lead" for UAVs when it trails behind the Army in terms of inventory and hours flown. Maybe the Air Force

should argue for being the executive agent for Humvees next. After all, according to its FY08 budget, the Air Force is buying more Humvees than aircraft or UAVs in Fiscal Year 2008.

Patrick Harding
Arlington, Va.

Airpower Classics

As a former B-29 crew member during the Korean War, I was happy to see the B-29 featured [*"Airpower Classics," March, p. 96*]. However I have a minor nitpick: The 19th Bomb Group was not a SAC unit, but was a unit of 20th Air Force. There was a SAC B-29 wing on Okinawa, the 307th, and another SAC B-29 wing at Yokota, Japan, the 98th.

Also, Okinawa had not yet been returned to Japanese government control. It was governed by the US Army Ryukyus Command during the Korean War.

Charles Sill
Modesto, Calif.

Bombers Over Korea

As a reservist who was called to EAD on 10 August 1950 and served in the 452nd Bomb Wing in Korea, I enjoyed very much your pictorial article "Bombers Over Korea" [*February, p. 58*]. Thanks for the great pictures of the B-26s and recognition of their mission.

I would like to point out one misconception that occurs in the captioning.

Although some reservists were activated for one year, many were called for 21-month periods of active duty. I was one of those, serving from 10 August 1950 to 23 April 1952.

I don't recall hearing any official policy for the different lengths of duty. However, it was my impression that those reservists who had significant prior (WWII) service were recalled for one year, whereas those of us with no prior service (my case) or a relatively short and usually postwar period of service got the 21-month tours.

My recollection is that most of the activated personnel were in for 21 months, but it's been awhile and I don't remember any stats ever being distributed or subsequently published.

In the fall of 1951, a significant number of reservists were transferred from the 452nd to other units in Korea, apparently to avoid decimating the squadrons in early 1952 when those 21-month hitches would be drawing to a close. I was transferred to the 502nd TAC Control Group on 2 September 1951 and remained with that unit until rotated back to the States for discharge in March of 1952.

I hope I'm not the 1,000th member

who has offered this little correction, but I did want to help keep the record straight.

Thanks for providing a great magazine and getting the message out.

Allan Stone
Rocklin, Calif.

UAV Mystery

The "sense and avoid" technology that unmanned aerial vehicles lack today is a mystery [*"UAVs—The Next Generation," February, p. 70*]. Wasn't a combat environment considered when these UAVs were developed? This technology should have been one of the first features developed on this vehicle. Any combat environment is going to have heavy air traffic. Three collisions in Afghanistan are unacceptable. Sense and avoid technology has existed for decades. The F-111 had terrain following radar. The new Lexus can parallel park autonomously due to sense and avoid technology. Granted, the Lexus isn't moving at 200 mph, but the technology does appear to exist. The ability to identify friend or foe on the ground is "sense and identify" not "sense and avoid." I understand this can be more technically challenging but not impossible, perhaps utilizing transponders.

Joel Menges
Hershey, Pa.

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