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**Letters**

The April 2006 article on Brigadier General Schwalier states, "In October 2000, al Qaeda operatives launched an audacious, waterborne bombing of the Navy destroyer USS *Cole* in Yemen's Aden harbor. Seventeen US sailors perished. After this disaster, which happened on Cohen's watch, the Pentagon chief did not seek a scapegoat. All realized that it was an act of war, and the ship's captain was not faulted."

While I was not faulted for the suicide terrorist attack, the subsequent Judge Advocate General Manual (JAGMAN) investigation pointed out that my entire chain of command and I did not do enough to anticipate this new type of threat that USS *Cole* was faced with on the day of the attack.

I have never wavered from the principle of accountability. As the former commanding officer of the USS *Cole*, I was the accountable officer for how my ship and heroic crew performed before, during, and after the attack. There is, however, a fundamental difference between accountability and blame.

As the commanding officer when USS *Cole* pulled into Aden, Yemen, for a brief stop for fuel, I chose to selectively implement a limited set of force protection procedures. This discretion, which the Navy allows its commanding officers, was based on my assessment of the threat and the conditions in the port, as they existed that morning. Through a confluence of unpredicted issues beyond my control, the crew of USS *Cole* and I were destined not to be able to protect our ship due to the lack of foresight by the entire chain of command, which failed to foresee and prepare us for the type of attack perpetrated by those suicide terrorist bombers. Even today, our military system is unable to defend against suicide terrorists anywhere in the world.

In January 2002 I was selected for promotion to captain. Since then, my promotion has been blocked or held up at various points in my chain of command, including the United States Senate. It currently remains in an undetermined status with the Secretary of the Navy, due to political concerns.

My career has been effectively terminated. I have not been promoted; I have not been given assignments of increased responsibility; nor have I been selected for future commands. This has occurred against the backdrop [where] every person in my chain of command has been either promoted or given positions of greater responsibility. This is the same chain of command that, according to the JAGMAN investigation, bore responsibility for the attack.

In short, I have suffered the same fate as Brigadier General Schwalier and have been made a political scapegoat in the War on Terrorism.

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