



Forlorn Hope

During the Napoleonic era, the British Army stormed many fortresses. Always leading the doomed charge into the breach was a unit known as the Forlorn Hope. Modern conventional troops are treated as a Forlorn Hope. They are sacrificed on the altar of political correctness. Beware the revenge of the crusaders.



The Conventional Army Scapegoats A Special Warfare General

The Army censured a retired three-star general for the chain of errors that followed the friendly-fire death in 2004 of Army Ranger Pat Tillman. It referred to a special panel whether retired Army Lieutenant General Philip Kensinger should also have his rank reduced.

Army Secretary Pete Geren told a Pentagon news conference that Kensinger was "guilty of deception" and had deceived investigators. "It's a perfect storm (Geren watches a lot of movies) of mistakes, misjudgments and a failure of leadership," said Geren in announcing his decision after an investigation into the death of the former pro football player.

Kensinger headed Army special operations. The general bore the brunt of the punishment. Nine other officers were criticized but not punished. It is only natural to punish the major decision maker. However, the US has not punished any conventional general for incompetence in the past fifty years. Why do they scapegoat a special warfare general now? This attack on a special warfare general is part of the ongoing war

between the conventional army and the small number of more effective special warfare personnel. Exactly what did General Kensinger do?

A biased Army panel will decide whether Kensinger should be stripped of his third star. Geren said he considered recommending a court-martial but ruled it out. "I looked at many factors," he said. Kensinger, he said, "compromised his duty."

"He failed to provide proper leadership to the soldiers under his administrative control. ... He let his soldiers down," Geren said. "General Kensinger was the captain of that ship, and his ship ran aground." Geren said that investigations have conclusively shown that accidental fire from US troops was responsible for the death in Afghanistan of Tillman, who had walked away from a \$3.6 million pro football contract to become an Army Ranger. The Army initially suggested that Tillman, who was 27, had been killed in a firefight with enemy militia forces. The Army then arranged a ceremony to award Tillman a silver star for bravery.

Geren said the death "was a tragedy ... this was an accident." He said he could understand how the Tillman family and other Americans might reach the conclusion that there was a cover-up. "The facts just don't support this conclusion," he said. "There was no cover-up." Still, he said, "We have made mistakes over and over and over, an incredible number of mistakes in handling this. We have destroyed our credibility in their eyes as well as in the eyes of others."

Geren cited "multiple actions on the part of multiple soldiers" in compounding the confusion that surrounded the death. "There was never any effort to mislead or hide" or keep embarrassing information from the public, the Army official said.

Even though Tillman died from friendly fire, "he still deserved the silver star he was awarded after his death", Geren said.

Whether or not Tillman deserves a medal for valor is not at stake. Scapegoating is. Currently, the US Army offers only two medals for valor under fire (not counting the Medal of Honor, which the military is loathe to award to warriors): the Distinguished Service Cross, and the Silver Star. If Tillman was killed by friendly fire, he did not earn

a medal for valor unless he was engaged in offensive combat against the enemy at that time. If America starts awarding valor medals to personnel killed by friendly fire, it is unfair to a large number of American heroes who got no medal at all for their valor.

In this case, the Bronze Star would probably be more appropriate. Every man who is killed or wounded by friendly fire deserves a medal. A person who frags (i.e. kills or wounds) a fellow combatant on purpose for inappropriate reasons should be shot, of course. Neither should medals be handed out by quota on the basis of gender or minority racism. The circumstances of each individual determine which medal he/she should be awarded. (See above)

What this whole medal question overlooks is the fact that enlisted men exhibit most of the combat heroism, but most of the medals are given to officers. There are at least thirty times as many enlisted men in combat units compared to officers. Why the discrepancy in the ratio?

Aside from his decision to censure Kensinger, Geren said that he was accepting recommendations by General William Wallace, who conducted the investigation, for nine other officers. These other officers included Brigadier General Gina Farrisee, director of military personnel management at the Pentagon, and Lieutenant Colonel Jeff Bailey, the battalion commander who oversaw Tillman's platoon and played a role in the recommendation for his Silver Star. Both will receive memoranda of concern, Geren said.

Escaping any blame was Lieutenant General Stanley McChrystal, head of the military's Joint Special Operations Command. He oversees the military's most sensitive counterterrorism operations.

The conventional US Army is mismanaged by a coterie of incompetents. Just like all incompetents they are vicious protectors of their own prerogatives and ruthless liquidators of those who are more effective. Thus, they frequently scapegoat personnel who are most hated by them. They hate special warfare because it is America's most

effective warfighting element which, in comparison to the conventional military, causes continuous embarrassment to the incompetents.

The question is: "Who should have been blamed and forced out of the service?" We do know that all news releases and investigations of death are carried out by the conventional army, not by special warfare. Special warfare is busy fighting wars, and the conventional army is busy with bureaucratic infighting. This whole mess should be investigated further.

Breaker McCoy