

Chapter 4

Other Newspaper Articles

Eglin Eagle, July 4, 1996

Twelve airmen: taken before their time

by Staff Sgt. Jody J. Clor

AFDTC Public Affairs

More than 5,000 Americans, including President Clinton, paid tribute Sunday morning to 12 members of the 33d Fighter Wing killed June 25.

King Hangar was the memorial service site due to its 90,000 square-foot floor space. The hangar not only accommodated the mourners, but also more than 300 local and national media were on hand to bring the service into the homes of millions around the world.

Long embraces reflecting the joy for survivors and teary eyes showing the sadness of death was more than an emotion; it was reality.

A lone bagpiper played "Amazing Grace," while family members, co-workers and commanders of the slain sat together in mourning. Moments later the solemn ceremony began.

After remarks by Chaplain Col. LaVerne L. Schuellerler and Chaplain Lt. Ray W. Hirsch, Katherine Rash reached towards heaven for the men and women of the 58th FS with her voice by singing "On Eagles' Wings."

Placed behind her were two F-15 Eagles from the 58th Fighter Squadron. For some, the roar of an F-15's engine represents the sound of freedom and the United States Air Force lost some of its best men battling for that liberty.

"These men represented the best of America and they gave America their best," President Clinton said early on in his eight-minute speech. "they stepped forward to lead our mission for peace and freedom. They did so with courage, strength and skill."

President Clinton asked those at the memorial service including Secretary of the Air Force Shelia Widnall and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Ron Fogleman to praise the American heroes, who gave their lives in service to America.

“Our Nomads have ceased their wandering,” the President said in his final words to the multitude. “They have come home. May God embrace their souls. May God bless America’s mission of peace and freedom, for which they gave the last full measure of their devotion.”

After the President’s speech, the 33d Fighter Wing’s 59th Fighter Squadron paid tribute in their own way. Without a cloud in the sky, four F-15s in a horizontal row rapidly approached King’s Hangar from the south. Just as they neared, the left-middle plane broke away from its group and flew toward heaven. And on Eagle’s wings, the 59th also reached out to their comrades ... they flew the missing-man formation.

Seconds after the fly-by, a shout echoed out to the members of the 33d Fighter Wing calling them to attention. Then, the command “Order Arms” gave way to an emotional moment as every member presented their fallen comrades with a present ... a well deserved salute.



President Clinton vows to punish those who committed this evil deed.



Above, several airmen from the 58th Fighter Squadron embrace on the 33d Fighter Wing's flightline parking ramp Friday. The group reunited after their 20-hour trip on two C-141s from Saudi Arabia. Twelve of their friends and co-workers are gone but not Forgotten. Left, wreathes with the posthumously awarded Purple Heart Medals represented each of the 12 fallen airmen.



Eglin Eagle, July 4, 1996

President's speech touches thousands of hearts

Editors note: this is the written text in full of the speech given by the President at the memorial service for servicemen, killed in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

Governor Chiles, Congressman Scarborough, Governor McKay, General Shalikashvili, Secretary White, Secretary Widnall. Under Secretary DeLeon, General Fogleman, General Hawley, General Cranston, Colonel Dylewski, the chaplains, Chief Lowe.

To those brave servicemen who were injured, we thank God for your presence here today. To the families of the 12 men who we honor today who died in the service of our nation.

These men represented the best of America, and they gave America their best. They stepped forward to lead our mission for peace and freedom. They did so with courage, strength and skill.

As members of the Nomads, the 33rd Fighter Wing, as communicators and mechanics, crew chiefs and technicians, they kept our aircraft flying, and they owned the skies. Time and again they gave up the comforts that most of us take for granted, traveling far from home and family to take up America's cause.

There is a passage in Isaiah in which God wonders, "Whom shall I send; and who will go for us?" Isaiah answers, "Here I am, Lord. Send me." These men we honor today said to America, "Send me".

We will remember them as patriots, but they were also husbands and fathers, Sons and brothers, colleagues, neighbors and friends. Some came from families with a proud tradition of military service. Some have brothers and sisters serving our military today. Some had dreamed of joining the Air Force since they were little boys.

All of them showed by the example of their lives the same spirit of service they brought to their careers. They were always among the first to lend a hand when someone was in need. They served as soccer coaches and Sunday school teachers. They helped the victims of hurricanes and volunteered as firemen. They loved their cars, their sports, their families and their mission. One of them was on his third tour in Saudi Arabia. Another volunteered so airman with larger family obligations could stay home.

They were all very different, as I saw when I met with their families. They came from different regions, different ethnic groups, different religious and political backgrounds. But they were united by love of nation, mission and family. They touched the lives of many other people, and because of them we all lead safer and better lives.

On behalf of the American people, let me say to their families and loved ones, and to their friends in the Eglin community, we are grateful for their service. We stand with you in sorrow and in outrage. They were taken before their time, felled by the hands of hatred, in an act whose savagery is matched only by its cowardice. We will not rest in our efforts to capture, prosecute and punish those who committed this evil deed.

But today, in the warm embrace of our faith, let us put aside our anger for a moment to remember and honor those who were lost; to find strength in their service, to thank God for the lives they lived, to continue the struggle for freedom and decency to which they devoted their lives.

We're blessed to live in a prosperous land in a time of peace, but we are not free from peril. While the modern world brings to all of us many new opportunities, it also leaves us more open to the forces of intolerance and destruction, and especially to terrorism, so often rooted in ethnic and religious hatreds — because terrorists can strike anywhere from the Tokyo subway to the streets of London, from the Holy Land to the World Trade Center in New York, and Oklahoma City. And now, in Saudi Arabia.

My fellow Americans, during the long struggles of World War II and the Cold War, America stood fast for freedom. In our time, terrorism is the enemy of peace and freedom. America must not, and America will not, be driven from the fight against terrorism.

In this effort, every American must stand behind the men and women of our Armed Forces. Every American must stand against violence and hatred, and stand for dignity and tolerance at home as well as abroad. We must honor the memory of those we have lost by up holding the ideals for which they lived and the mission for which they gave their lives.

To the loved ones of those 12 fine men, I know there are no words to soothe the loss of a father or a husband, a brother or a son, a fiancé or a dear friend. The rest of us can only hope that there is some solace for you in the pride and passion they brought to their work, the strength and decency they demonstrated every day, the love and respect they engendered and which surrounds you today, and the gratitude of their nation.

Let us now praise these quiet American heroes, who gave their lives in service to America. May they rest in peace and may their names live on forever:

Tech. Sgt. Daniel Cafourek
Sergeant Millard Dee Campbell
Senior Airman Earl Cartrette, Jr.
Tech. Sgt. Patrick Fennig
Master Sgt. Kendall Kitson, Jr.
Tech. Sgt. Thanh Gus Nguyen
Airman 1st Class Brent Marthaler
Airman 1st Class Brian McVeigh

***Airman 1st Class Peter Morgera
Airman 1st Class Joseph Rimkus
Senior Airman Jeremy Taylor
Airman 1st Class Joshua Woody***

Our Nomads have ceased their wandering. They have come home. May God embrace their souls. May God bless their families and their loved ones. And may God bless America's mission of peace and freedom, for which they gave the last full measure of their devotion.



King Hangar, the site of Sunday's memorial service was dedicated May 5, 1955 in honor of Maj. Lyle Russell King. Construction on the 90,000 square foot hangar, the largest of its kind at the time, began March 17, 1947, at a cost of more than \$500,000.

Photos by Craig McDonnell



President Clinton delivers his memorial service speech to more than 5,000 visitors and military members who paid tribute to family and friends of the 12 fallen base airmen. Clinton's speech was also televised live on national television.

Saudis' wavering on base security wasn't passed to higher-ups in U.S.

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by Bradley Graham

Washington Post

WASHINGTON - Before last week's terrorist attack on U.S. military housing in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, the Air Force commander in charge of the air wing there never told superiors about the reluctance of Saudi authorities to expand the security buffer zone around the housing complex, senior Air Force officials said yesterday.

The evident communication gap between the one-star general and others up the chain of command in the United States meant no high-level U.S. influence could be brought to bear on Saudi authorities to widen the security perimeter next to the apartment building that bore the brunt of the truck-bomb explosion a week ago in which 19 U.S. service members died and hundreds were injured.

In addition, Defense Secretary William Perry and Gen. John Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were taken by surprise over the weekend when Brig. Gen. Terryl Schwailer disclosed that Saudi authorities had turned down two requests to widen the protected area around the apartment complex from 100 feet to 400 feet. Also surprised were all other commanders in the chain between Schwailer - who leads the 4404th Air Wing, which consists of several squadrons - and the Pentagon's top leaders.

"He did not up channel the conversations between his commanders and the Saudis," said a senior Air Force officer.

Defense officials have said that a wider buffer zone between the truck bomb, which exploded just beyond the perimeter fence, and the apartment complex would have resulted in fewer casualties. Immediately after the attack, the protected area was expanded to 400 feet.

Pentagon officials yesterday said it was understandable for Schwailer to expect the Saudis might eventually act on the perimeter request, particularly since they had not ruled it out and had responded favorably to other requests for tightened security around the housing complex.

"I know everyone in town is looking for a scalp, but . . . this was someone who, it appears, was working the security problem on several fronts. This perimeter issue was just one of the fronts," said another senior Air Force official.

Schwailer disclosed the Saudis' rebuff Saturday but he did not provide details about the talks, which he said he understood to be in progress when the bomb went off.

Administration officials asserted that the kingdom's government frequently requires U.S. envoys to broach a proposal several times before considering it seriously.

At the same time, diplomats said that the Saudis occasionally have refused to grant a U.S. request for fear it would fuel violence by Islamic dissidents who believe the regime is corrupt and too closely allied with the West.

Richard Haass, a Middle East policy-maker in the Bush administration, said that in this case the Saudis "were clearly reluctant" to widen the perimeter at Dhahran because "they do not like to admit there is a threat . . . and it would highlight the American presence."

The disclosure that Saudi authorities had resisted U.S. requests to accept a broadened buffer zone has raised questions about whether the Saudi government did enough to protect U.S. personnel after a smaller bombing that killed five Americans and two Indians in November in the capital, Riyadh, and a rash of threats against Americans by Islamic extremist groups.

Two Senate committees - on intelligence and armed services - have announced hearings next week into the circumstances surrounding the Dhahran bombing. The chairman of the intelligence committee, Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., said over the weekend the Defense Department needs a "shake-up" and asserted he may push for Perry's resignation.

Perry and Specter have feuded recently, with Perry refusing to attend an April hearing called by Specter on reforming the intelligence community.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., joined Specter in suggesting Perry might have to resign, and compared the truck bombing to the 1993 military mission in Somalia that ended after 18 American soldiers were killed in a firefight.

If congressional investigations show that the requests to extend the security perimeter "were as badly mismanaged as Somalia was . . . then I frankly think some people will have to resign," Gingrich said.

Information from the Los Angeles Times is included in this report.

Florida military bases mourn Saudi casualties

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COCOA BEACH, Fla. (Jun 27, 1996 4:23 p.m. EDT) - Flags flew at half-staff and faces were grim at two U.S. Air Force bases in Florida Wednesday as military families mourned the losses of loved ones in the deadly truck-bomb blast in Saudi Arabia.

At Eglin Air Force Base, in the Florida panhandle near Fort Walton Beach, and at Patrick Air Force Base near Cocoa Beach on the state's east coast, military officials and townspeople expressed anger and sadness at the deaths of U.S. personnel in the deadly attack on a military housing complex in Dhahran.

"It's clearly a very tragic time for our people, a time of sorrow," said Col. Patrick Carr, vice commander of the 45th Space Wing at Patrick.

In the close-knit military community near Patrick, residents flew U.S. flags outside their homes at half-staff as military counselors readied to help victims' families. Preparations were under way for a private memorial service Sunday for military families.

Officials said families of victims were being notified by a military team made up of a notification officer, a chaplain and a medical officer.

The attack was the subject of conversation at the local Officer's Club and at Phil's Barber Shop near the base, where current and former military personnel pay \$7 for a haircut.

"I think it was cowardly," said Frank Zamboni, a retired Air Force colonel who believes the attack was in retaliation for U.S. participation in the Gulf War.

"It was only a matter of time that something like this would occur after the Persian Gulf War," he said. "Those people don't forgive, they try to get even."

"Why pick on our troops?" asked Misty Gallentine, a hair stylist at Phil's. "I think any act of terrorism is a cowardly way of going about things."

Officials said 51 personnel from units at Patrick were deployed in Dhahran and all had been accounted for. They said five members of the 71st Rescue Squadron of the 1st Rescue Group died in the blast -- Master Sgt. Michael Heiser of Palm Coast, Florida, Staff Sgt. Kevin Jerome Johnson of Shreveport, Louisiana, Capt. Christopher Adams of Massapequa Park, New York, Capt. Leland Haun, hometown unknown, and Airman First Class Justin Wood of Modesto, California.

At a somber press conference at Eglin, where more than 8,000 U.S. military personnel are stationed, officials mourned the loss of at least five men based there and said they were providing "what comfort we can" to families of the dead.

"This is obviously an extremely difficult time for all of us involved here at Eglin," said Maj. Gen. Stewart Cranston, commander of the Air Force Development Test Center. "Eglin is a very close-knit community and our hearts go out to all of the family members of our people."

Officials said about 320 military personnel with the 58th Fighter Squadron and other units from the 33rd Fighter Wing were deployed in Saudi Arabia as part of Operation Southern Watch, a mission to enforce provisions of the no-fly zone over southern Iraq. About 150 were due to return to Florida Friday as their tours ended.

"I'm outraged and I'm angry and I hope that we catch the people who are responsible for it," said Col. Gary Dylewski, commander of the 33rd Fighter Wing.

At MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Army Gen. Binford Peay, head of the U.S. Central Command, said the U.S. military has rushed intelligence, medical and other specialists to Saudi Arabia. He also told a press conference that the bodies of the 19 dead Americans would be flown to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware Thursday.



Air Force Times 07-08-96 Issue

THE REVERBERATIONS CONTINUE / SECURITY REVIEW FOLLOWS ATTACK IN SAUDI ARABIA

By Steven Watkins
Times staff writer

Flying operations at the air base in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, returned to normal June 28, three days after a giant truck bomb reduced to rubble an eight-story residence hall, killing 19 airmen and injuring more than 400 people.

But little else could be considered anywhere near normal as the Air Force and the world struggled to understand the inexplicable and make military members less vulnerable to terrorist attack.

The blast, felt as far as 50 miles away, shattered virtually every window in the compound and threw people from their chairs and beds.

But reverberations from the blast did not stop there. They continued on: to air bases in Germany and Turkey where medical teams were dispatched to Saudi Arabia to treat

victims; to France, where President Clinton and other world leaders vowed justice; to Washington, D.C., where FBI and Air Force investigators snapped to action; to Florida and Nebraska, where Eglin, Patrick and Offutt Air Force bases mourned their fallen comrades; and throughout the country to the families and friends of those killed and injured.

Security concerns remained high at King Abdul Aziz Air Base, a Saudi base where about 3,000 troops from the Air Force's 4404th Wing (Provisional) and the British and French air forces launch flights to patrol the no-fly zone over southern Iraq. About 2,300 Air Force personnel are in Dhahran supporting the 5-year-old coalition effort known as Southern Watch to enforce a no-fly zone over southern Iraq. In all, there are about 7,000 Air Force personnel throughout the Persian Gulf region, Air Force spokesman Capt. Mike Caldwell said.

As flight operations geared back up in the early morning hours of June 28, a bomb threat that turned out to be a hoax forced troops to take cover for an hour beginning at 4:45 a.m. Five hours later, about 500 people on base gathered at the Air Force's passenger terminal for an hour-long memorial for the 19 airmen killed or presumed dead. Throughout, Air Force personnel who were not recuperating from wounds worked tirelessly to clear wreckage, relocate people displaced by the bomb attack, restore base facilities to working order and get flying operations back to normal pace.

On June 28, 52 people were still recuperating in military and civilian hospitals in Saudi Arabia and Germany, FBI and Air Force investigators continued sifting through wreckage for clues, and Air Force members around the world mourned and remembered their fallen comrades.

A host of new security measures were taken after the attack. Outside the base, Saudi security officers increased their patrols, while Air Force security police increased patrols inside. At the gates to the base and the nearby Khobar Towers compound where the attack occurred, security checks were stepped up. U.S. military members are forbidden from traveling outside the base except for official reasons and they must wear civilian clothes when off base.

Residents of buildings destroyed or damaged by the blast were moved to buildings further inside the fence. A senior Air Force official said a review to consider more security protections for overseas personnel is imminent. Two previous security reviews already have been held in the last year, he said.

Now, amid the recovery effort, many are asking whether enough was done and whether troops can be safe at a time when they are deployed more than ever.

In Dhahran, several people interviewed said they had few security concerns before the blast because of the stringent security measures in place. But defense officials acknowledged there were previous hostile incidents reported at the Dhahran base in recent months that should have hinted at a possible attack, including suspicious vehicles

driving by the targeted compound of high-rise dormitories, and dining and recreation facilities. News reports also talked of outsiders taking pistol shots at the compound, taking photographs and attempting to crash a gate.

Capt. Kathleen Cook, an Air Force spokeswoman, said Air Force police had significantly stepped up security precautions since November when a car bomb killed five American civilians and two Saudis in the capital of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Also based in Riyadh is the headquarters of Joint Task Force Southwest Asia, which manages U.S. and allied military operations there.

"They were at a heightened awareness already based on the ongoing [security] reassessments that we do," Cook said. "This could have been much worse had they not been prepared and not been alert for such an action."

After the November car-bomb attack, security police installed waist-high concrete barriers and concertina wire around Khobar Towers. The complex, about three dozen buildings of dormitory-style residences, recreation centers, basketball courts, garages, administrative offices and a softball field -- is home for most troops who are normally deployed two to three months at a time.

Even though senior Air Force officials were on alert for possible terrorist activities after the November car-bomb attack, they were nevertheless surprised by the size of this latest attack in Dhahran.

The improved security measures proved no match for the gigantic bomb that ripped through Khobar Towers from outside the compound's perimeter.

"A lot of people are asking whether we had anticipated anything like this" Capt. Scott Vadnais, an Air Force spokesman at Dhahran, said June 27. "No, we hadn't planned on something like this, otherwise, we would have taken precautions to prevent it."

It appears the explosion was at least several times more powerful than the truck bomb that decimated the federal building in Oklahoma City last year, officials said.

"We have come across a weapon that is much, much larger than what we have prepared to deal with," a senior Air Force official said, adding that "we're dealing with a whole new area [of terrorism] here." But other than the temporary reduction in flights in Dhahran, normal operations continued at other Air Force bases in the region.

"If anything, this has redoubled each of the countries' commitments to the current policy [of keeping a strong U.S. presence in the region]," the senior Air Force official said. "Nobody has communicated to us that we are not invited anymore."

In fact, the Air Force has been gradually boosting its presence in the Persian Gulf region in recent months with regular deployments of aircraft and people called air expeditionary forces. In October a 600-person air expeditionary force was deployed temporarily to

Bahrain. A 1,200-person force was sent to Jordan in March, a 1,000-person force was sent to Qatar in June and another deployment is being planned for fall.

THE VICTIMS

Here are the people who were confirmed dead or listed as unaccounted for as of 2 p.m. June 28 following the June 25 terrorist attack at the Air Force housing complex in Saudi Arabia.

--Dead

Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.:

Master Sgt. Kendall K.J. Kitson
Tech. Sgt. Patrick P. Fennig
Tech. Sgt. Thanh V. Nguyen
Staff Sgt. Daniel B. Cafourek
Sgt. Millard D. Campbell
Senior Airman Earl F. Cartrette Jr.
Airman 1st Class Brent E. Marthaler
Airman 1st Class Peter J. Morgera

46rom Patrick Air Force Base, Fla.:

Capt. Christopher J. Adams
Capt. Leland T. Haun
Master Sgt. Michael G. Heiser
Staff Sgt. Kevin J. Johnson
Airman 1st Class Justin R. Wood

--Unaccounted for

Eglin:

Senior Airman Jeremy A. Taylor
Airman 1st Class Brian W. McVeigh
Airman 1st Class Joseph E. Rimkus
Airman 1st Class Joshua E. Woody

Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.:

Staff Sgt. Ronald L. King

46rom Patrick:

Senior Airman Paul A. Blais

BEFORE: THE NATION MOURNS AFTER: THE NATION FORGETS

Re: Terrorist Bomb-Khobar Towers-25 June 1996

The lives of our troops are in danger and no one is held accountable or responsible! I am an only child who lost her only child in that senseless bombing. In this long painful year we have yet to hear that anyone has been found guilty of such a horrendous crime. The Terrorists are criminals but the commanders who did not heed the warnings of an imminent attack are also guilty of murder in my book!

Washington is notorious for passing the buck and our servicemen deserve better. The latest quote is, "Accountability does not mean always finding someone to punish when something goes wrong." Does anyone agree with me that accountability should come at all levels? We're not looking for a scapegoat but someone is responsible and this needs to be dealt with.

The Air Force lost 19 young dedicated men, and Mike was one of the most decorated enlisted men in the Air Force. They lost an exceptional airman in that young man, and I lost my future, and the system doesn't seem to care. This was not the first attack on Americans and it won't be the last. Why don't we start taking care of our own? Protect our service members or keep them home! If you read this and want to add to it, please let the Times hear your opinion.

Thank you for listening and letting me tell it like it really is.

Fran Heiser

THE FAMILIES 'WILL PAY FOREVER'

By William Matthews

The punishment comes a year late and falls far short, say the parents of two of the men who died in the Khobar Towers attack. For Brig. Gen. Terryl Schwalier, punishment means denial of a second star. As a result, Schwalier decided to retire early.

Responsibility "falls on more people than just on that one individual," said Sandra Wetmore, the mother of Airman 1st Class Brian McVeigh, one of 19 airmen killed in the explosion in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, on June 25, 1996.

"Others need to be held accountable. They didn't protect our boys," she said. But Defense Secretary William Cohen said he would not punish those above Schwalier in the chain of command. "They are trying to close an ugly chapter," Wetmore said. "Unfortunately, others were remiss."

To Fran Heiser, the mother of Master Sgt. Michael Heiser, Schwalier's punishment is minor compared to the magnitude of her loss. Being denied a promotion and retiring early will cost Schwalier hundreds of dollars a month in retirement pay.

"But I lost my only child in that bombing, and we will pay a price for life that can't compare to a couple of lost dollars per month and a career cut short," Heiser said. "The world will soon forget, all except the families -- we will pay forever and we didn't do anything wrong."

In deciding to block Schwalier's promotion to major general, Cohen said he weighed the military's obligation to the families of the dead. "On the one hand, we have a fine officer - - General Schwalier is a fine Air Force officer -- but by the same token, we have families that need to also have an accounting and want to know whether or not measures could have been taken which possibly might have reduced the chance that their sons and daughters could have escaped harm or death," Cohen said. "These things are never easy, and I just tried to be as fair-minded as I could and I came to this judgment."

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THE CHIEF'S SHINING EXAMPLE

By Robert F. Dorr

When Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman walks out the door, he can hold his head high.

As chief of staff of the Air Force for the past three years, Fogleman has shown courage and integrity. He is stepping down over a matter of principle, without finishing his four-year tour of duty. At a time when many officers care more about their careers than their country, Fogleman has shown us a shining example of honor.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the elected and appointed civilians who run our nation and who, under our Constitution, hold authority over military officers. Capitol Hill legislators, our president and especially Defense Secretary William Cohen all failed us when we needed them.

Especially culpable is Cohen, who is proving to be a disaster at the helm of the Pentagon.

Already under fire for his rubber-stamping of the military's feckless strategy document, the Quadrennial Defense Review, and already stumbling on other personnel issues, Cohen should have supported his Air Force chief of staff.

Instead, the secretary betrayed Fogleman. Cohen even began talking to possible successors before Fogleman decided to request early retirement.

Fogleman concluded a fortnight ago that Cohen planned to overrule him and block the promotion of Brig. Gen. Terryl Schwalier, who was the commander in Saudi Arabia when a truck bomb killed 19 airmen.

This was a mistake by Cohen. It highlights the growing gulf between civilians and military leaders in America.

Many on Capitol Hill -- where military experience is minimal -- cried out for Schwalier's head on a platter.

President Clinton, who has no military background, seems to have stayed out of the dispute. Cohen gave off conflicting signals at first, then appeased the louder and less reasonable voices in Congress, where he once served.



KHOBAR TOWERS - Memorialized Yet Unresolved

By Tim Dyhouse

<http://www.vfw.org/magazine/jun01/38.shtml>

No one has yet been held accountable for the 1996 terrorist attack that killed 19 U.S. airmen in Saudi Arabia. But thanks to concerned Americans, the airmen are now commemorated by four memorials.

Five years ago this month, a truck bomb exploded outside the Khobar Towers military complex at King Abdul Aziz Air Base near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The blast killed 19 U.S. airmen and wounded 109.

The task of finding and punishing the airmen's killers, which had been stalled since 1999, appears to be reinvigorated. In April, Secretary of State Colin Powell stated the Bush Administration is "keenly interested in solving this case."

Washington has reason to believe that Iran was involved in the attack. In February, U.S. Justice Department officials identified Ahmad Sherifi, a senior member of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, as one of some two dozen suspects responsible. Attorney General John Ashcroft is expected to seek an indictment against Sherifi.

Eglin: 33rd fighter wing

As investigators sifted through the rubble of Khobar Towers in 1996, fellow airmen, veterans and community residents set about formally memorializing the airmen killed. Their work has led to four memorials at four Air Force bases.

The first was dedicated in June 1997 at Eglin Air Force Base (AFB) in Florida. It memorializes 12 "Nomads" of the 33rd Fighter Wing, which is based at Eglin.

The wing's veterans group, the Nomad Association, raised funds for the \$200,000 memorial. Its centerpiece is a curved, gray granite wall etched with the names, pictures and biographies of the 12 men. An inscription reads: "Our Nomads have ceased their wandering." In front of the wall, a flame flickers from the blade of a sword thrusting upward.

Enlisted heritage hall

On the third anniversary of the Khobar Towers bombing, Maxwell AFB near Montgomery, Ala., dedicated a memorial exhibit at the Enlisted

Heritage Hall. It honors all 19 airmen.

According to Airman magazine, students at Gunter's Air Force Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy donated artifacts and money to help create the exhibit. The display includes objects recovered after the bombing and uniforms worn by three airmen killed in the blast. Enlarged photos of the explosion site make up the exhibit's backdrop.

Patrick: 71st rescue squadron

In June 2000, Patrick AFB, on Florida's east-central coast, also dedicated a memorial. It specifically honors five members of the 71st Rescue Squadron, 1st Rescue Group killed at Khobar. (The unit moved from Patrick to Moody AFB, Ga., in 1997.)

The memorial, designed by Ann Heyer, is a half-circle comprising five red granite slabs, each with a laser-etched likeness of the five airmen from Patrick. It also includes the names of the other 14 airmen killed. It sits on a foundation containing some of Khobar's remnants.

At the memorial's dedication, Air Force Col. Thomas R. Friers, former 1st Rescue Group commander, said the pieces of Khobar Towers within the foundation will "forever bind this [memorial] to that tragic memory."

The Cape Canaveral Chapter of the Air Force Association and the Brevard County Civilian-Military Relations Council raised the more than \$60,000 needed to build it.

Without the help of the various veterans and civilian groups, these memorials may never have been built. Because of a federal regulation, only private funds could be used for their construction. It was perplexing even to those who work at the top-levels of the military.

"I remain stunned and puzzled that I have extremely limited legal authority to use taxpayer funds to erect a memorial to airmen who have died in the line of duty," said then-Air Force Secretary F. Whitten Peters at the Patrick AFB memorial dedication. "What you see before you today is therefore the product of the generosity of this community."

Offutt and Wright

Offutt AFB in Nebraska took another approach. Home station of Staff Sgt. Ronald L. King, who was assigned to the 55th Contracting Squadron, Offutt dedicated a dining facility in his memory on April 20, 2001.

Airman 1st Class Christopher Lester of the 88th Civil Engineer Group also was honored. His fellow airmen at Wright-Patterson AFB in Ohio conducted a memorial service for him on July 1, 1996. An exhibit featuring Lester's photo is located in Building 22 at Wright-Patterson.

Now all they await is justice.

From Eglin AFB

Master Sgt. Kendall Kitson, Jr.

Tech. Sgt. Daniel Cafourek

Tech. Sgt. Patrick Fennig

Tech. Sgt. Thanh Nguyen

Sgt. Millard Campbell

Senior Airman Earl Cartrette, Jr.

Senior Airman Jeremy Taylor

Airman 1st Class Brent Marthaler

Airman 1st Class Brian McVeigh

Airman 1st Class Peter Morgera

Airman 1st Class Joseph Rimkus

Airman 1st Class Joshua Woody

From Patrick AFB

Capt. Christopher J. Adams

Capt. Leland "Tim" Haun

Master Sgt. Michael Heiser

Staff Sgt. Kevin J. Johnson

Airman 1st Class Justin R. Wood

From Offutt AFB

Staff Sgt. Ronald L. King

From Wright-Patterson AFB

Airman 1st Class Christopher Lester