

LETTERS

To the Editor—On Friday, October 7, 2011, my friend and mentor, General John M. Shalikashvili, was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery. General Shalikashvili, or simply Shali as his friends knew him, served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1993 to 1997. He was the first foreign-born officer to become Chairman, the pinnacle of the American military, and the first to have done so having begun his military career as a conscripted private. As Chairman, Shali was President Bill Clinton's principal military advisor.

At the induction ceremony, President Clinton noted Shali's ability to take command of the room without speaking a word. His calm, steely gaze was all that was needed. The President also spoke of Shali's candor and integrity, saying that too often Presidents are told what others think they want to hear, rather than what they need to hear to make sound decisions. General Shalikashvili, said Clinton, "never minced words, he never postured or pulled punches, he never shied away from tough issues or tough calls, and most important, he never shied away from doing what he believed was the right thing."

Before becoming Chairman, General Shalikashvili served as Supreme Allied Commander Europe along with several other prestigious commands. Yet for me, his most important command was the 1st of the 84th Field Artillery, 9th Infantry Division, at Fort Lewis, Washington, from 1975 to 1977. At the time, he was a lieutenant colonel and I was a mere private first class and served as his aide and driver. Our entire time together was less than 2 years. Yet, as lowly as my role was and as brief as our time together was, it set me on the path I walk today, 36 years later.

For days and weeks at a time, I was with Shali on various military exercises conducted across the Pacific Northwest and, on one occasion, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The heat, cold, dust, and fatigue were sometimes grueling. One time, after weeks living outside in the broad expanse of eastern Washington state, I recall returning to my barracks and thinking how odd it felt to be inside a building.

On another occasion, some thought Shali and I were dead, killed by a "short-round" from one of our own howitzers. The battalion had 155mm and 8-inch howitzers, very large and deadly instruments of destruction. One evening as Shali and I were leaving an observation post during a live-fire exercise, the air was ripped by the sound of a nearby explosion. The timing of our departure was everything. Just minutes before, we had left the safety of the fortified concrete bunker from which we had observed the fury of a battalion-wide, time-on-target round of shelling. All available "tubes," spread miles apart, synchronized their fire to create a near simultaneous explosive maelstrom in the designated impact area in the small valley spreading out below. The impact area was where artillery rounds were supposed to land. That didn't always happen.

Following the time on target, Shali and I got in our jeep and drove down the quarter-mile rutty two-lane road leading from the observation post to a larger gravel road. As we reached the turn onto the larger road, an airburst from a 155mm exploded short of the impact area and approximately where he and I had just been a few minutes before. An airburst involves a fuse setting that causes the steel shell to rip apart in the air over a target. The resulting white-hot shrapnel pulverized almost everything in its path. The radio from the observation post crackled, "Cease fire! Cease fire!" Everyone was relieved to hear Shali on the next radio transmission ask, calmly but firmly, for an explanation of what had just happened. Had we left just a minute or two later, we would have been under the rain of shrapnel.

Shali once arranged for the entire battalion to come to Washington, DC, following a long field exercise at Fort Bragg. That was my first visit to Washington, and I loved every minute. One day, as then Lieutenant Colonel Shalikashvili and I drove around what I know now to be Washington Circle, he pointed toward The George Washington University and said, "That is where I went to graduate school. I got my master's degree there." I remember looking toward the campus not knowing that at that moment I

was being introduced to the university where I would devote, so far, 20 years of my life.

Yet Shali introduced me to even more. It is correct to say that he was the first true intellectual I met. He spoke several languages and was quite obviously brilliant. Indeed, in the years since, I have rarely met his equal. During the many hours we spent bouncing around in military vehicles during wargames, I learned about European history, politics, and international affairs. With Shali's encouragement, and when the demands of constant training permitted it, I also attended college part-time. It was not unusual for me to have an M-16 assault rifle in one hand and a textbook in the other.

Yet what has remained with me from all those years ago are not the facts and ideas I may have learned, whether in the classroom or from Shali, but rather a way of being. I learned the beauty of a life devoted to public service, to leading and inspiring young people, and to learning. Shali never stopped learning, evolving, and thinking. After his retirement, indeed even after his first physically debilitating stroke, his thinking continued to evolve. His mind remained as bright and active as ever.

As I listened to Shali on those rare occasions when he spoke of his life as a 16-year-old war refugee coming to a new country, I learned the meaning of endurance, commitment, honor, and principle. I also learned of humility and grace. I rarely saw him lose his temper, and I certainly never heard him shout even when artillery rounds landed short of the intended target. In these ways he provided a model of living that has guided me all these years. I have too often fallen short of my goals, but because of him I have always had a clear sense of what my goals should be.

In 1977, at my request, Shali arranged my transfer to West Germany where I began an exploration of the world that continues to this day. As Shali rose in the ranks and I continued my education, eventually becoming a professor at the university he so admired and in the international affairs program from which he graduated, our friendship deepened. I think we took mutual pride in our

respective accomplishments. The last time I spoke with him was 2 months before his death. I called him as I left to travel in several difficult parts of Africa as part of a research project. His last words to me were, “Don’t get yourself killed.” He was always taking care of his troops, and his friends.

On occasion over the years, some of my former students have told me that I have played a role in their lives that sounds similar to the one Shali played in mine. That is a great gift, one that I cherish. It is, indeed, my purpose in being here. Teaching facts and ideas is only the start. Mentoring young people is the deeper purpose. Mentoring is an invitation to participate in a dialogue about our place in the world. It involves questions about how to live a vibrant and consequential life. It is about ways of seeing the world and understanding one’s place in it. With time, most theories and facts whither and fade from memory. But approaches to life endure. General Shalikashvili’s legacy extends well beyond his stamp on history. It lives in the lives of the many thousands of people he touched along the way.

—Dr. Steven Livingston
Professor

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To the Editor—Having written on the subject myself (Christopher J. Lamb and Edward Marks, *Chief of Mission Authority as a Model for National Security Integration*, INSS Strategic Perspectives, No. 2 [Washington, DC: NDU Press, October 2010]), I can only commend Peter Phillips and Charles Corcoran for their article on “Harnessing America’s Power” in *JFQ* 63 (4th Quarter, 2011), especially as we share perspectives. However, there are two points that might usefully be brought to the attention of the authors as well as readers. The first is fairly minor, one of correction. In noting the question of “authority,” the article states that the only two entities in the bureaucracy with the authority to direct interagency efforts are Chiefs of Mission (resident Ambassadors) and the Assistant to the Secretary

for National Security, or National Security Advisor (NSA). That statement is true for Chiefs of Mission, but I believe if you check the law, it will state that the National Security Council (NSC) itself, much less the NSA, has only advisory, not executive, authority. The executive authority referred to belongs only to the President. Effective NSAs have enormous influence, of course, and do have an important responsibility for coordination, but they do not have executive authority. If anyone has any doubt about this, he can merely ask anyone who has held this office.

The second point is more substantive. The authors’ primary organization recommendation is the creation of “[r]egional, civilian-led . . . interagency bureaus charged with applying *all* U.S. instruments of power, including military, within their geographic areas.” I applaud this recommendation—not surprisingly, as I proposed something similar in an article entitled “The Next Generation Department of State.” However, the authors do not say where these bureaus would be located. Are they to be freestanding “agencies” reporting directly to the President? Probably not, as this would only turn the White House and NSC into an operational entity in competition with the departments. Yet they have to be fixed somewhere in the Federal bureaucracy and have to report to someone. The obvious answer is, of course, location within a reorganized Department of State, where they would function as department-located, Washington-based “regional teams” analogous to the Country Teams operating in specific countries. And the question of authority is managed by delegating to the President appointees heading these “bureaus” the appropriate rank and a version of Chief of Mission authority. Unlikely to be adopted, if only because of resistance from at least some departments—no names, no pack drill—this approach is actually quite practical as it builds on current practice and organization, and is therefore an incremental, not revolutionary, reform.

—Ambassador (Ret.) Edward Marks

The authors’ response to Ambassador (Ret.) Marks—We concur with your first point on the authority issue. We did not intend to mislead the reader. The “Assistant for National Security” is, by law, simply an advisor. However, we made the logical assumption that an effective advisor is directing interagency efforts on behalf of the President.

On your second point about regional teams within the Department of State, we believe this concept is certainly a valid option, but it is not what we envisioned. Rather, we prefer an “outside the beltway” and “outside any one agency” approach more comparable to current combatant commands. Just as the various military Services provide forces to combatant commands, the various executive agencies would provide “forces” to the regional interagency chief (RIC). The RIC is appointed by and reports directly to the President. Executive agencies serve as force providers for the RIC, filling “organize, train and equip” roles similar to the military Services.

—Peter C. Phillips and
Charles S. Corcoran