



# ROSSMOOR NEWS

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## Republican Perspective

*By John Littig*

The Commander Is Responsible - or Not?

In Japanese tradition, samurai who failed their duties or were otherwise shamed committed hara-kiri. The practice has died out in modern times. The last known instances were the leader of a failed coup in 1970 and the CEO of a failed construction company in 2001. Like the samurai, they took responsibility for their failure and shame.

In the United States Navy, a sea captain who loses his ship to storm, collision, sinking, or enemy action, faces consequences. He faces a board of inquiry and possibly a court martial and resulting punishment. The commander is responsible.

In September 2012, Taliban fighters attacked Camp Bastion in Afghanistan. All the attackers were killed (except one captured), but not before they killed two U.S. Marines and destroyed several aircraft at the base. Though neither was present at Bastion, two Marine Corps generals were held responsible. Both were drummed out of the corps. Well, OK, they were forced to retire - there was no audible drumming.

The Marine Corps commandant said, "While I am mindful of the degree of difficulty the Marines in Afghanistan faced in accomplishing a demanding combat mission with a rapidly declining force, my duty requires me to remain true to the timeless axioms relating to command responsibility and accountability." He determined one of the generals committed "an error in judgment" in underestimating the risk posed by the Taliban. And the other general "did not adequately assess the force protection situation" at Bastion. Again, the commander is responsible.

In the terrorist attack on our diplomatic and CIA outposts in Benghazi, our facilities were sacked and burned. Four Americans including the U.S. ambassador were killed and many others injured. On the face of it, this debacle seems far more disastrous than Camp Bastion. For one thing, more lives were lost. For another, this was a high-profile loss that exposed, for friend and foe alike, our impotence or at least our unwillingness to defend our people and our installations. So who has been held accountable? No one.

Surely someone made the decision not to adequately protect the facilities. Surely someone made the decision not to launch a rescue mission to repel the invaders. Who

were those someones? It is the Obama administration's responsibility to make that determination and to hold that commander or commanders responsible. But this has not happened.

Of course, the samurai remedy for shame and failure is too severe. But surely a penalty at least equal to that dealt to the two Marine Corps generals would be appropriate.

But the Obama administration appears uninterested in assigning responsibility for the decision failures surrounding the Benghazi death and destruction. In the Obama administration, the commander is not responsible.

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