

# Letters on the acquittal of US marine pilot

10 March 1999

*We received the following e-mail in response to our March 6 article "US pilot who killed twenty on ski gondola acquitted."*

To the WSWs editor:

On behalf on the majority of Americans whom I feel agree that this pilot should have been punished for joy-riding and killing 20 innocent people. Please don't believe that this lopsided judicial system doesn't disgust us too. It runs over into our government and it is a blight on America.

MM

Birmingham, Alabama

Having finished reading how the American pilot, whose "joy-riding" in a multimillion-dollar government jet caused the deaths of 20 people, was acquitted sickens me. I have always been a staunch supporter of a strong military and the military in general. But when this pilot was obviously breaking the rules AND caused the deaths of 20 people and is let off, to call myself an American is almost shameful.

How can we expect any country in the world to respect America's opinion on anything with the recent Clinton fiasco where, though obviously guilty of perjury, the President is let off? ... And then coupled with this case. America is losing, or maybe has lost, all respect in the eyes of the world. This is a horrible slap in the face to the families of those killed. I wonder how Capt. Richard Ashby can sleep at night.

PS

I don't care what anybody said. The man flying the jet is GUILTY!!!

Too low. Too fast!!! HELLO!!! WAKE UP PEOPLE. He killed 20 people and got away with it. That's not right. If it were a member of my family, I would keep fighting for justice!!!

NC

Dear Mr. Walsh,

The people of Italy should be extremely upset with this unfortunate incident. Unfortunately, mistakes

happen. Italians should recognize that American forces are in their country to protect their citizens.

Hopefully, Italian citizens will recognize that American forces benefit their freedom and country. Most Americans appreciate all that Italy stands for as a country, but more importantly, most Americans realize that members of the US military make mistakes.

Sincerely,

A concerned American Citizen

Dear editor,

This story reminds me of how dysfunctional the US military system is. I have experience with it working at Norfolk Naval Shipyard.

When I heard how NIMA's map product was faulted, my experience working there from 91-98 brought to my mind other failures of this agency as an arm of the military. I had worked on nautical charts and remembered one incident when a complete causeway was omitted because the "numbers" had to be made: including it would have otherwise taken too much time. When I left that place last year they were still trying to get completely computerized and things operated close to chaotic.

KP

Washington, DC

I am disgusted at this verdict. This is a mockery of the justice system. I cannot imagine how heartbreaking it would be to lose a loved one in such a senseless accident due to the outrageous, arrogant behavior of that pilot; but to hear that his jury of "peers" did not see this as a crime must just put them over the edge!

Why should this surprise any of us, though? When this country's leader could lie under oath, obstruct justice, and behave so immorally and get off without a scratch, why should we even be surprised?

My heart goes out to all those families and friends who lost their dear ones.

SS

In reference to your story about the airman acquitted

this week, he is an instrument of the government. As an officer he follows orders diligently. A mistake was made, but willful disregard for his superior's orders had to be proven for him to be guilty of a crime. He was flying within the loose parameters of his superior's orders, ran into some problems with his altimeter and an accident occurred. He was not allowed to express his remorse for the victims until the charges were addressed, and he did so upon acquittal with honor. I see both sides of this. Anger is appropriate. Let it be addressed to the responsible party, the institution itself, not the flyer.

MR

So what is being done in Italy to prosecute the American war criminals? If they wish to murder their own with immunity in the US, that's their business. When they murder outside the US, it's the world's business.

JD

While the trial is unknown to me other than the details published in the press, and I therefore cannot be the judge, the verdict certainly seems to be outrageous and an embarrassment to all lovers of truth and justice.

SPC



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