

To Whom IT May Concern;

My husband, (b)(6) and I, with heavy hearts, submit our inquiry into the death of our son, Stephan Mace, who was killed on Oct. 3, 2009 COP Keating...

The doorbell rang at 6am, EST, on Oct. 4, 2009.... and our world was changed forever. Two military chaplains stood on our doorstep to deliver the news of Stephan's death... I, still upstairs in our bedroom, heard the mournful cries of my husband' " No, No, No..... not Stephan, not my little buddy".....

Still in shock and adjusting to our new reality, we are mindful of the stories of COP Keating that Stephan shared with us on his visit home in August... and while we are in shock, I can not say that we are surprised that Stephan now resides in ANC, Section 60.

When Stephan was home on leave in August, he was clearly concerned about conditions and ROE at COP Keating. He had lost about 20 pounds, due to the one meal a day regime at Keating, and was having a hard time holding a real meal down. One evening at dinner, he shared with us many disturbing details about life in Keating.... an outpost in a very narrow valley, hard for helicopters to get into and out of.... In fact, he spoke of his trip out of Keating for leave... his helicopter came under fire, the pilots called for air support, which never arrived. We were fortunate to have those two weeks with Stephan, and we all understood the significance of his visit.

Stephan expressed to our family his experiences while in Afghanistan, and clearly, he was baffled by the ROE. I grew up as an Air Force dependant, or BRAT, my father was a veteran of Vietnam and served in DaNang and Saigon during the TET offensive....and a dear friend's father was a resident of the Hanoi Hilton for eight years. So, I thought I was prepared to hear Stephan's story.... Was I mistaken...

Stephan described COP Keating as a place where he and his fellow soldiers were "sitting ducks"... where they were fired upon regularly... RPGs... but the rules of engagement dictated that they could only fire back IF they saw where the muzzle fire was coming from, where between 100-300 Taliban inhabited the nearby village, using the mosque for cover, and dressing in burka.... He spoke of one RPG attack which took out the main generator for over two weeks, leaving them without water or electricity. He described an environment that was beyond what anyone should be expected to endure... in or out of

the military.

So, again, when the doorbell rang and we found the chaplains on our doorstep, we were not surprised.

BUT WE ARE VERY ANGRY.... angry at the impossible conditions these young men were placed in, at the seeming complacency of the American public, the American Congress, the leaders of the military, and the commander in chief. It would be our goal that no other family has to endure what we are enduring, that no other soldier has to go into battle with both hands virtually tied behind their backs, with policy that puts more value in "making nice" to the local population than to the men who have committed themselves to preserving our freedoms at home.

IF WE ARE GOING TO COMMIT OUR TROOPS INTO AFGHANISTAN, a country that HAS NEVER BEEN CONQUERED, then we need to give our fighting men every opportunity to protect themselves, as well as the local population.

Our specific questions regarding Keating??

1. Whose bright idea was it to put the camp in a hole??? One quick trip through Europe shows age old wisdom in planting fortresses on the high ground.... We do not need three stars on our uniform and a stint through the Army War College to recognize that COP Keating was NOT strategically placed... unless you were the enemy looking for an easy target. We have been provided with a DVD from the BBC showing the difficulty of just getting in and out of Keating, based on the narrow valley, the river, and all the fire helicopters in particular come under when trying to land...

2. If we choose to engage in a war in Afghanistan, it seems we need, as a country, to be committed to giving our soldiers every opportunity to achieve their mission... which, oh, by the way, seems very nebulous at the moment. War is ugly, and if our main concern is to win over the population, perhaps we need Peace Corps workers rather than Army units stationed there... though, we have a sense the local population would rather we just go away and leave them alone....

3. Why are we fighting a ground war when we have the means to send in drones and fighter jets to take out enemy targets much more effectively??? Do we not have the internal fortitude to fight a battle to win?? If the local populace supports the aid and comfort of the

Taliban, are they not the enemy, as well?? WHERE IS THE AIR WAR??? WHERE ARE THE DRONES??? It seems to us we are fighting a 19th century war in the 21st century.

4. We believe that the ROE are fatally flawed... and we are not alone. "The ROE General McCrystal has set in place is killing Marines( and everyone else who has lost their life or been wounded in Afghanistan). Sure, there were ROE in Iraq, but Marines were genuinely encouraged to think for themselves, assess the situation, and ascertain the best course of action independently This is not being done in Afghanistan, where rules are micromanaging the tactical situation: By Herschel Smith... AP

We believe the above statement is directly related to Stephan's death. The commander on duty when Stephan was stationed there was strictly "following orders", while the previous commander, we have learned, thought for himself and acted to defend his men over following the ROE. AMEN.

5. The Washington Times reported, on Oct 16, that the US ignored warnings before the attack at Kea                      phan predicted this, so we are baffled as to why Army Major (b)(3), (b)(6) was so surprised. We could have predicted this. ... and                      en. Paul Vallely was quoted as saying, " Why didn't they react and have immediate support on site, based on the intelligence, and even based on the initial attack that occurred?" OUR QUESTION PRECISELY.

We do not want any other family to experience the pain and heartache we are feeling.... but we can assure you that this is compounded by the feeling that inadequate troop support, tragically flawed strategy, and unwillingness by the military and congress to have the intestinal fortitude to provide our soldiers with a clear mission, as well as the tools to accomplish that murky mission, and a general lack of awareness about the Afghan culture, led to the death of our son, and many others.

Again, we want answers.... why were those men placed in the position of being fish in a barrel??? Why were they so restricted in protecting themselves against the enemy??? Where is the air power??? What is our real mission?? Do we have the guts to do what it takes to win a war... or we simply placing our soldiers in teh position of protecting each other???

We have spoken out about our concerns, and will continue to do so ...

but it is our expectation that the Army will conduct a thorough, thoughtful, and honest investigation into the incidents of Oct. 3, so that the mistakes that occurred there will never be repeated.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

on behalf of our hero, Spc. Stephan L. Mace