



Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

Post 3272

Avon, Connecticut

“On Target”

(Our Newsletter’s 10th Anniversary Year)

(The Post’s 65th Anniversary Year (1945 – 2010))

**JUNE 2010
LETTER #104**

The Post met on Wednesday, **26 May 2010** at the Italian Club with 48 members in attendance. The *Ladies Auxiliary* prepared once again another delicious, home-cooked meal with plenty of second helpings for our hungry troops and their equally-hungry guests. We again thank the Ladies for their time, energy and dedication.

Our **next meeting** will be held on **Wednesday, 23 June 2010** at the Italian Club. Cocktails begin at 1800 hours with dinner at 1830 hours. Join our **Post Family** for another evening of **good food, stimulating conversation and great friendship**. We hope to see you there!!!

Commander Bill Newman opened the meeting at 1945 hours. The *Officer of the Day* Mike Gould led the members in the Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance. *Chaplain Tom Chrosniak* offered the VFW Prayer and *Fred Hudon* provided the POW/MIA Prayer. The minutes of the last meeting and the financial report were available on the tables for the members to review courtesy of *Adjutant Aldo Vernesoni* and *Quartermaster Don Perreault*. Both reports were reviewed and approved by the members present.

Comrades in Distress this month include *Mike Battaglino, Mike Busha, Dr. Tim Curran, Mike Dlubac, Mike Gresh, John Higgins, Josephine Hinman, Jim Katzung, Nat Michon, Ben Pereslugoff, Harold Schaal, Al Simonelli and Ed Stepien*. Please remember to keep them in your thoughts and prayers - and visit them if you are able. We ask that you also let our *New Chaplain Bob Galiette (860-673-9324)* know if you learn of any other Post members who are ill or hospitalized.

Service Officer Bill Coffey reported that he assisted John Pappalardo with a request for a friend but had no other service requests to report during this period.

Under Committee Reports, *Bill Newman* advised that the 2010 Poppy Drive is going well – in fact so well that we are running out of poppies. He has ordered more poppies (2000) from National but they haven’t arrived as of today. He asked anyone with poppies to bring them to Wal-Mart tomorrow (Thursday) as we still have four (4) more days there. He also noted that there are a few openings during this final push. Bill stated that we have deposited \$7814 to date but there are many cans yet to open and count. Things look very promising but much depends on these final four days.

Parade Chairman *Bill Samol* reported that the Memorial Day Parade & Picnic arrangements are in place and the weather report looks promising for Monday. He noted that he has 15 antique cars lined up to take veterans who prefer to ride. Bill encouraged as many veterans as possible to attend the Avon Cemetery Ceremonies in the morning and for all veterans who will participate in the parade to be on hand at the Tow Path Annex around 1030 hours. The parade this year will include two (2) floats and will be longer. It should be a great day and all members are invited to the parade, ceremony at the Veterans Memorial and Post picnic at the Italian Club. The Commander then called Bill forward and honored him with a Certificate of Appreciation for his dedicated service as Memorial Day Parade Chairman over the last ten (10) years (2001 – 2010). Many Thanks, Bill for a great job for the Post!

Bill Newman noted that our Post Color Guard for Memorial Day will consist of *John Ballantyne* (Army), *Mike Fyler* (Air Force), *Mike Gould* (Marines) and *Lacy Pack* (Navy). *Incoming Commander Roy Walton* will act as Captain of the Color Guard. Bill hoped that as many as possible will march and wear their Blue & Grays with Overseas Cap or military uniform. He remarked that the veterans are the focal point of the parade – so the more that participate the better the parade! Bill also seconded Bill Samol's request for members to participate in our visits to the six (6) Avon cemeteries early on Memorial Day morning. Our Color Guard, Chaplain, Buglers and members will assemble at 0730 hours on Old Farms Road by O'Neil's Chevrolet and convoy together to these cemeteries. After the cemetery visits, we will meet at Lee Wilson's house (64 Mountain View Ave) where there will be coffee and refreshments provided by the Wilsons and their neighbors.

Tim Curran advised that our 1st Golf Fundraiser date is set for Saturday 26 June at Blue Fox Run beginning at 1000 hours. A sign-up sheet for this event is available and we are looking for 8 volunteers to man the 9th Tee for 2-hour shifts. Please see Tim or Bill Newman to sign up for this key fundraiser for our General Fund. Our remaining Golf Fundraiser dates at Blue Fox Run are Saturday, 14 August and Saturday, 18 September. Please keep these dates in mind and contact Tim Curran (860-673-0673) as he is looking for volunteers to cover these dates as well.

Under Communications, Commander Newman advised that Carmon Funeral Home donated \$200.00 to our Post as part of an incentive in their blood drive. Carmon's offered to donate \$25.00 for each new blood donor & \$15.00 for returning donors to local Chamber of Commerce non-profit members of their choice and several selected the Avon VFW. We offer our sincere thanks to *John Carmon* for including our Post in his list of selected organizations.

New Post Officers for 2010 – 2011

Our Change of Command Ceremony was conducted under New Business and *George England*, Past Post Commander, acted as the Installing Officer. Roy Walton was installed as our new Post Commander, Grant Hagedorn as our new Senior Vice Commander and Philip Schenck as our new Junior Vice Commander. Bob Galiette also was installed as our new Post Chaplain. Re-installed for another year were Don Perreault as the Post Quartermaster, Aldo Vernesoni as Post Adjutant, Bob Hunt as Post Advocate, Scott Thomas as Post Surgeon, Mike Gould as Officer of the Day and Bob Hunt also as Post Historian. The Post Trustees for the next year include Bill Newman (3 years), Bill Samol (2 years) and Dick Petersen (1 year). Our heartiest congratulations to these Post Officers who now assume their respective duties and offices for the 2010 – 2011 Year.

Under the Good of the Order, Bill Newman advised that our Post once again has been designated as an All-State Post by the Department of Connecticut for 2009 – 2010. He noted that this will be made official at the 90th State Convention at the Rocky Hill Marriott on 12 June at the Awards Breakfast. Wendy Zacchera, the Teacher of the Year for Grades K-5 for the Dept of Ct, will also be honored at that event and will address the convention.

The Ladies Auxiliary at their May Meeting also installed their officers for the 2010 – 2011 year with Elinor Salvetti acting as the Installation Officer. The Officers for the new year include Catherine Walton as President, Julia Pack as Vice-President, Elinor Burns as Treasurer, Caroline LaMonica as Secretary and Eva Del Bon as Chaplain. Our heartfelt congratulations to the officers of the Ladies Auxiliary and we wish them a very successful year!

If any of the wives, sisters, daughters, granddaughters (16 or older) of our veterans are interested in joining the Ladies Auxiliary, please call Auxiliary President Catherine Walton at 860-673-3771.

Post Activities & Developments

On 20 May several members of the Post participated in a Flag Dedication Ceremony at St. Ann's Cemetery on Arch Road. *Commander Newman* dedicated the new flagpole and American Flag, Acting Chaplain *Don Perreault* offered the dedication prayer and a Post Detail consisting of *Mike Gould and Lee Wilson* raised for the first time over this cemetery a 5x8 American Flag which will be flown year around and will be illuminated at night. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and the hand salute was rendered by the following participants – *Mike Gould, Bill Newman, Don Perreault, George Slack, Lee Wilson and Aldo Vernesoni*. This cemetery serves as the final resting place for approximately 200 American Veterans – many of whom were members of our Post.

On Sunday, 30 May Bill Newman was invited to the Valley Apostolic Church Service at the Ethel Walker Chapel on the campus in Simsbury. During the service which was dedicated to our veterans and our country, the Minister Steven Harvey presented Bill with a check for \$200.00 as a donation to our Poppy Drive. Bill told the congregation about our Post and the purpose of the Poppy Drive – and of course thanked the assembly for their generous donation to our Relief Fund.

Memorial Day was a perfect day in many ways! Not only was the weather perfect in every way but had a great turnout for our cemetery visits which was followed by a wonderful selection of refreshments at *Lee & Terri Wilson's* house and attended by 20 or so veterans. The Parade featured many veterans marching or riding in pristine antique cars. The crowds were both large and enthusiastic, the fly-over was on time and the parade included many participants – including two attractive floats. The ceremony at the Avon Veterans Memorial featured *Bill Samol* as Master of Ceremonies, the Post Color Guard representing the Four Services and captained by *Roy Walton*, an opening prayer by our own Chaplain *Tom Chrosniak*, the National Anthem sung memorably by sisters from the Avon Schools, an inspiring Keynote Address by *Bob Gallette*, the introduction of 12 World War II Vets, Taps by two accomplished High School buglers and a large and very appreciative public. This was followed by our traditional Post Picnic at the Italian Club with plenty of cold drinks and delicious food to satisfy another large assembly of participants and their guests. A day to remember and our sincere thanks to all who made it possible and unforgettable!

On 10 June, *Bill Newman* met with Mary Ann Sutter, Laura Young, teachers and student leaders at the Thompson Brook Elementary School regarding the "Reach across the World" initiative organized by Laura and supported by Avon Boy & Girl Scouts and the Avon Public Schools. The scouts and students have been gathering school supplies and donations to supply the needs of a school of 250 Iraqi students near the base of LTC Doug Sutter, a member of our Post and father of two in the Avon School System, who is serving in Iraq and requested help for this school. Our Post has agreed to pay for the shipping costs of these packages. Doug's daughter read a letter from him ... On behalf of myself, Team Forcado advising team and the IA An Numaniyah Location Command we would like to thank you for opening up your hearts to the children of the An Numaniyah Area. As in any war, children are the real victims. They don't have a say in whether or not there is a war, and they suffer just as much as the adults. But what I see everyday is really inspiring. Even though there are real issues here, there are always a ton of kids on their way to school. It reminds me of home, and reminds me that there is real hope for a future here, because they are investing in the education of their children. Your generosity will go a long way in building that future for some lucky school children. It will also help the Iraqi Army strengthen its ties with their community. Every little bit helps and I want to thank you and applaud you for your efforts. Thanks, LTC Sutter

Also on 10 June, several Vietnam Veterans from our Post attended a meeting at the West Hartford Town Hall regarding the "Moving Wall" which will be in West Hartford on 17 – 20 June. The meeting discussed the duties of volunteers who will act as guides during this 4-day visit. The opening ceremony will be on Thursday evening at 7:00 pm at the West Hartford Town Hall. Timeslots, consisting of 2-hour shifts, were selected and the following Post members will participate as guides for this event – *Bill Coffey, Tim Curran, Rich Ecke, Brian O'Donnell, Bill Newman, John Pappalardo, Don Perreault and Bob Skeels*. Post Members are encouraged to visit the "Moving Wall" during this visit!

The Department of Connecticut 90th Convention was held on 11, 12, & 13 June at the Rocky Hill Marriott. On 12 June, *Catherine Walton, Roy Walton and Bill Newman* attended the Awards Breakfast where our Post was honored as an *All-State Post* and also awarded 1st Place for its Post Newsletter. *Wendy Zacchera* was also honored and presented with an engraved plaque designating her as "*Teacher of the Year (K-5) for 2009-2010*". She also addressed the assembly and was warmly recognized by the VFW members and their guests.

Ben Pereslugoff
Navy – WWII

It is with much sadness that we inform you of the passing of Ben Pereslugoff (83) of Avon on 12 June 2010. Ben was a Navy veteran of WWII who served in the Pacific Theater as a Seaman First Class. He enlisted and entered active service on 6Jun45 at Hartford. After basic at Sampson, NY, he was assigned to the USS Miami (CL-89) – a Light Cruiser of the Cleveland Class. She saw extensive action in the Pacific during the war and returned to San Francisco in May 1945 for overhaul. The ship returned to Pearl Harbor on 25 August. In September and October *the Miami* operated in the Ryūkyūs accepting the surrender of the small islands north of Okinawa. After a brief visit to Yokosuka, Japan, she steamed to the Carolines and arrived at Truk on 11 November to conduct a survey of bombing damage to the famous naval base there. The USS Miami returned home on 25Nov45 and arrived at Long Beach on 10 December. Ben was discharged from the US Navy on 19Aug46. His decorations include the American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal and the WWII Victory Medal. He was a former Post Commander, a Life-Member and a 50-year Continuous Service Member. Funeral Arrangements were handled by Ahern Funeral Home, Unionville with calling hours on 15 June. *Bob Galiette, Bill Newman and Bill Samol* represented the Post and *Mort Katz* participated in Masonic Service. May Ben rest in peace!

Please remember that our annual Ray Zacchera Memorial Picnic is set for Wednesday, 28 July beginning at 6pm at the Zacchera Compound on 15 West Ridge Drive off Route #44 in Avon. We will have plenty of food and beverages so come and bring your spouse or a friend. Let us know at the June meeting if you plan to attend so we can get an accurate headcount. We are, of course, most grateful to Alice Zacchera and her family for inviting us to use the compound again this year. As most of you know, Ray Zacchera hosted this Post Picnic for many years and we accordingly call this event "The Ray Zacchera Memorial Picnic" in honor and memory of our dear comrade!

Our new website is taking shape and will be operational soon. It will have much more information and photos than we had previously. It will also be a great recruiting tool for prospective new members. As you know, Lee Wilson is the Webmaster and will be keeping it current and adding material to enhance the site. We'll keep you informed as to our "going live" date.

We are pleased to report that the Post has received new member applications from the following veterans:

Gene Flynn – A US Army Veteran of WWII who served in the European Theater as a Sergeant with the 68th Constabulary Squadron in Germany during the Occupation. Gene entered active duty on 15Oct45 at Ft. Devens, MA and took basic at Ft. McClellan, AL. After assignments at Camp Pickett, VA and Ft. Dix, NJ, he was shipped overseas in March 1946 to La Havre, France and then "boxcared" to Bamberg, Germany and assigned to the 68th Armored Field Artillery, 1st Armored Division in Purlinger, Germany for 6 months. He was transferred to Budinger (outside Frankfurt) and assigned to the 68th Constabulary Squadron where he patrolled villages and also performed guard duty. He was then sent to Augsburg to patrol outer areas in weapon carriers or jeeps. Gene left Germany at Bremenhaven by Liberty Ship on Christmas Day 1947 and was discharged on 31Jan47. In 1949 he re-enlisted in the Army Reserves and was assigned to a 7.5 Rocket Battalion, was promoted to Sergeant First Class and was discharged in 1952. His decorations include the Good Conduct Medal, WWII Victory Medal and the Occupation Medal. Gene resides in Simsbury.

Chuck Boos – A Navy Veteran who served as an Officer during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Chuck was commission as an Ensign in 1961 from the Univ of Illinois and was assigned to the USS Bache (DDE 470) - an Escort Destroyer (*full-sized destroyers specially modified for ASW duty*). Chuck attended CIC School at Dam Neck, VA in July 1961 and attended Anti-Submarine Warfare School in Key West in Nov-Dec62. He served as an ASW Officer from Jan62 until Jun63 and underwent refresher training at Guantanamo, Cuba in May/June62 and School Ship, ASW School in Key West in Jul62. In Oct/Nov62 he participated in the Cuban Quarantine (Blockade) and was discharged from active service in June 1963. He served in the Navy Reserves from Jun63 to Jun72 and received reserve mobilization billets and various staff officer assignments as Squadron ASW Officer but wasn't activated during the Vietnam War. His decorations include the Navy Expeditionary Medal, Cuban Service, National Defense Service Medal and the Captain's Letter of Commendation. Chuck lives in Avon.

During our Poppy Drive our volunteers made contact with 12 individuals who were veterans and served overseas during a conflict. We have a list of these prospects and need to follow-up on the information they gave us. Many of these individuals were given envelopes with information about our Post, a letter informing them of reasons to join us and a new member application. We have contacted several of these veterans who gave us emails or phone numbers and are hoping they will come to one of our coffees or meetings. If you know of these local veterans, please contact them and personally invite them to visit us. We have the list available for your review!

It has been a *distinct honor and privilege* to serve as your Post Commander during the last two years. I shall always remember this experience and treasure it as one of the *highlights of my life*. We are blessed with a great Post and an extraordinary group of veterans who I have come to know well and respect deeply over these last 11 years. As the largest and most active Post in the Farmington Valley, we enjoy much *good will* because of our dedicated membership and our deep commitment to the local communities. In many ways we are *still serving our country and our communities*. One of my goals as Commander was to insure we made “All-State” as it serves to distinguish us as one of the leading posts in Connecticut. I trust we will continue to be an “All State Post” and strive for the “All-American” designation. We meet the criteria for an *All-American Post* and it is within our reach. For my part, I intend to work hard as your *Membership Chairman* to keep our membership growing as I firmly believe it is the key to a strong and successful Post– my goal is to get us to 200 members. As a Trustee of the Post, I intend to assist the Commander in any way I can and to continue to serve our members to the best of my ability. I am extremely proud of this Post and its accomplishments – and I am highly confident of our new leaders and look forward to a bright future for this historic Post as one of, or better yet, *the leading Post in Connecticut!*

In Comradeship,
Bill Newman

Noteworthy Quotes

Modern Warfighting

“Our soldiers, pitted against an enemy that fights dirty, operate under onerous prohibitions. They are not allowed to return fire unless the source -- a suspected enemy combatant -- is actually sighted. They must not shoot at unarmed individuals, even if they just set up and detonated an IED (improvised explosive device). They must issue verbal warnings and fire warning shots before shooting to kill. The exact level and danger of enemy fire must be evaluated prior to initiation of return fire. The use of heavy weapons and air strikes is strictly proscribed by complex regulations. It has just been announced that NATO commanders, flying in the face of common sense, are awarding "courageous restraint" medals recognizing soldiers who *avoid* the use of force. Turning our soldiers into combatant-peacekeeper hybrids feeds into the jihad narrative that accuses us of wanton murder of civilians. In fact, it is the jihadists who maim and kill civilians by the tens of thousands in mosques, markets, hospitals, and villages and then use the casualties as a weapon against us. President Obama reinforced the peacekeeping narrative in his speech at this year's West Point graduation. Addressing young men and women who will risk their lives to defend our country, the president defended the international institutions that he deems worthy of our allegiance: "We have succeeded by steering those currents in the direction of liberty and justice -- so nations thrive by meeting their responsibilities, and face consequences when they don't." Iran, for example? In that West Point speech, the president boasted that there will be no clear-cut victory in Afghanistan, no surrender ceremony, no banner headlines -- as if, by the force of his higher morality, he has turned G.W. Bush's dirty war into a clean operation that will turn the country over to local troops and restore peace and goodwill for all. This is a smokescreen to hide the nature of jihad -- a different kind of war demanding a different kind of victory and a different but equally unconditional surrender. The refusal to identify the enemy disarms our military. And the rhetorical transformation of retreat into a quiet kind of success notifies them that they will risk their lives in vain. The jihadis kill our soldiers, and it's because Israel won't surrender to Palestinian demands. The dangers faced by military personnel today stand in sharp contrast to the safe, comfortable living conditions of the general population, cushioned from distant battlefield realities, living in material abundance, and exempt from the draft. Our troops cannot prevail without material and moral support from our nation. But this support is stifled by a lethal narrative that criminalizes war, glorifies underhanded jihad fighting, and embraces subversion on the home front.” “Self-Inflicted Defeat”, Janet Levy, Am Thinker 6/4/10

Cyberwarfare

“The eye blinks in just over 300 milliseconds. In that time a computer message can travel twice around the world, transmitting a virus or malicious computer code across the Internet to disrupt or destroy crucial military networks. Military computers, just like your home computer, are subject to viruses and malware that can adversely affect their operation. Military networks are also vulnerable to intrusion and theft, but not only by identify thieves and credit card scammers. More than 100 intelligence agencies and foreign militaries are actively trying to penetrate our systems, and weapons-system blueprints are among the documents that have been compromised. Many countries are also developing offensive cyber capabilities. Cyberwarfare is especially attractive to our adversaries because the low cost of computing devices means you do not have to build an expensive weapons system, like a stealth fighter, to pose a significant threat. A dozen talented programmers could, if they find a vulnerability to exploit, cripple an entire information system. To prevent this from happening, the Defense Department is establishing the U.S. Cyber Command. It's mission is critical. The command and control of our forces, as well as our weapons and surveillance systems, depend upon secure and reliable networks to function. Protecting this digital infrastructure is an enormous task: Our military runs 15,000 networks and uses more than seven million computer devices. It takes 90,000 people and billions of dollars to maintain our global communications backbone. Establishing Cyber Command is just the latest in a series of steps the Pentagon has taken to protect our military networks through layered and robust cyber defenses. We have instituted strict standards to ensure that our firewalls are properly configured and antivirus software up-to-date. We have reduced the number of ports through which commercial Internet traffic enters and leaves military networks, and we have installed highly sophisticated defense systems that detect and repair network breaches in real time. But we cannot rely solely on a Maginot line of firewalls. It is not sufficient to react to intrusions after they occur. Waiting even milliseconds is too long. The National Security Agency has therefore pioneered systems that use our monitoring of foreign communications to detect intrusions before they reach our networks and to counter them with automated defenses once they arrive. These active defenses now protect all defense and intelligence networks in the .mil domain. Thanks to these active defenses, our networks are significantly more secure than they were just two years ago. Yet the cyber threat is so pervasive and pernicious that we must mount a broader and more permanent institutional response. Until recently, the military's cyber effort was run by a loose confederation of joint task forces spread too far and too wide, geographically and institutionally, to be effective. Defense Secretary Robert Gates recognized that the scale of the cyber enterprise had outgrown the military's existing structures. What is needed is a dedicated command to oversee cyber operations. U.S. Cyber Command will be led by a four-star general and be part of the military's Strategic Command. It will bring together a half dozen military organizations that each play a role in cyber operations. A single chain of command will run from the head of Cyber Command to units around the world. When this country was founded, enemy ships crossed the oceans in days. By World War II, aircraft crossed in hours. During the Cold War, missiles could do it in minutes. Now, cyber attacks can strike in less than the blink of an eye. In the face of this threat, the U.S. military must be ready to defend our country at network speed.” “Introducing U. S. Cyber Command”, William J. Lynn III, Opinion, WSJ, 6/3/10

Afghanistan Believes U.S. Will Pullout

“For a year now, President Hamid Karzai apparently has believed the U.S. can't defeat the Taliban.? 'The Western world figured out how to drive the German army out of Europe,' bestselling author and filmmaker Sebastian Junger told the Hoover Institution's Peter Robinson in an interview for National Review TV last month. "There's something like 10 or 20 thousand Taliban fighters, essentially barefoot in the mountains with AKs" — not exactly the Nazi war machine. According to Junger, whose latest book, "War," expands his dispatches from eastern Afghanistan in 2007-08 for Vanity Fair, "the problem isn't a military one in Afghanistan; it's a political problem in the countries of Europe and the United States." And yet, Karzai has so lost confidence in NATO's military ability to win the war against the Taliban that he is in secret negotiations with the extreme Islamist group, former high-level Afghan officials told the Washington Post last week. President Obama in December announced a reduction in the level of U.S. troops, beginning about a year from now, and he has pressured Karzai to cut corruption within his government and meddled in last year's Afghan elections. Why is it that Obama — who was so slow to criticize the presidential election a year ago in Iran, an enemy which is on the verge of having nuclear weapons — made such a point of bullying our ally, Afghanistan? In his campaign two years ago, he pledged that "we will not repeat the mistake of the past, when we turned our back on Afghanistan following Soviet withdrawal. As 9/11 showed us, the security of Afghanistan and America is shared. There must be no safe-haven for terrorists who threaten America. We cannot fail to act because action is hard." Of course, there was a military solution in Iraq, but it took a president willing to resist the pressure of both parties' establishments in Washington to implement it. Once in office, Obama put his handpicked commander in charge of Afghanistan, and he increased U.S. forces there. It is his, and only his, war now. But he has managed to finger-wag into estrangement Karzai, whose support we vitally need because the U.S. military strategy entails getting rid of Taliban forces so the Afghan military can operate where the Taliban formerly held sway. So the military solution the president was so

confident of in Afghanistan — the "smart war," the "good war," as it was portrayed in the 2006 and 2008 elections that brought them to power — could slip through America's fingers. The president was also big on expanding Afghanistan's nonmilitary aid and economic development. Well, the Pentagon has just discovered close to \$1 trillion in lithium and other untapped mineral deposits in the country. The gold, iron, copper and cobalt found might, ironically, make Afghanistan rich, as industrialized nations buy raw materials needed for computers and smart phones. But consider: Just as signs surface of this war being botched — strategically and diplomatically — it suddenly becomes more important than ever to win it. We can't let the Taliban — and al-Qaida — have a trillion dollars' worth of mineral riches." *"Losing the War That Has to be Won", Editorial, IBD, 6/14/10*

First Rule of War – “Know Your Enemy”

“In the new National Security Strategy released by the White House last month, the Obama administration rightly reaffirms that America remains a nation at war. Unfortunately, it refuses to identify our enemy in this war as what it is: violent Islamist extremism. This is more than semantics. *As military strategists since Sun Tzu have appreciated, the first rule in war is to know your enemy so you can defeat it.* The 2006 National Security Strategy did this: It correctly identified our enemy as "the transnational terrorists [who] exploit the proud religion of Islam to serve a violent political vision." The Obama administration removed those accurate and important words. One argument administration officials use to defend their avoidance of terms like "violent Islamist extremism" is that they are imprecise and lump together a diverse set of organizations with different goals, motivations, and capabilities. Yet the administration's preferred alternative term—"violent extremism"—is much more vulnerable to such criticism. To state the obvious, there are many forms of "violent extremism" with which America is not "at war." The strategies and capabilities needed to counter the specific threat of violent Islamist extremism are very different from those needed to deal with white supremacist extremists in the U.S. or genocidal militias in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet at no point does the 2010 National Security Strategy explain or defend its repeated use of the nebulous euphemism "violent extremism," which also has appeared in other strategy documents over the last year. The administration has also stated at times—including in its new National Security Strategy—that our enemy in this war can be identified as "al Qaeda," "al Qaeda and its affiliates," or as "al Qaeda-inspired terrorists." While that's a better characterization, it still suffers from a number of serious shortcomings. First, it is not fully accurate. Defining the enemy by reference to al Qaeda implies that this war is primarily about destroying an organization, rather than defeating a broader political ideology. This war will not end when al Qaeda has been vanquished—though that, of course, is a critical goal—but only when the ideology of violent Islamist extremism that inspires and predates it is decisively rejected. That ideology motivates many other groups and individuals. For example, the ambassador-at-large for counterterrorism, Daniel Benjamin, recently warned about the growing danger to the U.S. posed by the Pakistan-based Islamist extremist group, Lashkar-e-Taiba, which was responsible for the devastating 2008 attack in Mumbai, India. Finally, characterizing this war as being against a specific organization risks distracting our government from important policy questions about how to combat the ideological dimensions of the war that is taking place within Islam. It also may send a message to moderate Muslims that they can and should remain on the sidelines of this fight, while governments use conventional means to defeat al Qaeda. Muslims in fact understand better than anyone else the enormous difference between their faith and the terrorist political ideology that has exploited it. There is no question that violent Islamist extremists seek to provoke a "clash of civilizations," and that we must discredit this hateful lie. We must encourage and empower the non-violent Muslim majority to raise their voices to condemn the Islamist extremist ideology as a desecration of Islam, responsible for the murder of tens of thousands of innocent Muslims and people of other faiths. *How can we expect those Muslims to have the courage to stand and do that if we are unwilling to define and describe the enemy as dramatically different from them?* We must recognize the nature of the fight we are in, not paper it over. The United States is definitely not at war with Islam. But a group of self-identified, extremist Muslims has definitely declared war on us, a war which they explicitly justify by reference to their religion. Muslims across the world see the ideological nature of this struggle. I believe it is disrespectful to suggest they cannot understand these distinctions and act on them. As a former Democratic secretary of state, Dean Acheson, warned a half-century ago: *"No people in history have ever survived who thought they could protect their freedom by making themselves inoffensive to their enemies."* This remains the case today." *"Who's the Enemy on the War on Terror?", Sen Joseph Lieberman, Opinion, WSJ, 6/15/10*

This is our last Post Newsletter until September when we return ready, rested & renewed – have a pleasant summer!

Bill Newman