

Malkin: Eco-extremists block our path to peace

MICHELLE MALKIN Published 6:30 am CST, Saturday, December 8, 2001

Which is more important: Well-trained Navy pilots or well-rested toads? Increased military preparedness or increased antelope populations? Improved bombing facilities or improved fairy shrimp habitats?

The choice of environmental extremists, no-growth activists and NIMBY agitators across the country is clear. Even in wartime, this gang of greenies continues to put obscure plants, microscopic critters and sacred "open space" above their countrymen.

This week's tragic "friendly fire" bombing mishap in Afghanistan underscores the need to provide the military with adequate and realistic training ranges. Accidents happen. We are fortunate that there have

been so few in the war on terror. The reason for such minimal military and civilian casualties so far? Practice, practice, practice. But as Marine Corps Maj. Gen. **Edward Hanlon Jr.**, commander at **Camp Pendleton**, warned slowly eroded by encroachment on many

U.S. troops from irreplaceable training

grounds.

- Vieques. The most well-known target of green peaceniks and their anti-military allies is the Puerto Rican island of Vieques, which the Navy has used as an exercise area for naval aviation, surface gunnery and Marine amphibious landing practice for 60 years. It was the best and only live-fire training range for the **U.S. Atlantic Fleet**. But hysterical health claims of residents, including one man who blamed his baldness on Vieques bombing runs, led both the Clinton and Bush

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administrations to cave in to environmentalists, ethnic mau-mauists, and political panderers ranging from **Al Sharpton** and **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.**, to **Hillary Clinton** and **George Pataki**. The base is now scheduled to close in 2003.

Post-Sept. 11, the island eco-activists continue to oppose any live ammo practice for troops preparing to deploy to Afghanistan this winter. Puerto Rican Gov. **Sila Calderon**'s main grievance against the American military that forks over billions of dollars a year to her government? Too much noise.

- California. Earlier this month, the Navy retreated from plans to increase bombing runs (using nonexploding dummy bombs) at Fort Hunter Liggett near Big Sur. Along with the usual eco-radicals worried about fairy shrimp pools and endangered mint plants were opponents such as aging actor **Robert Redford**, who claimed a "many-decades-long relationship" with the area; Benedictine monks, who complained that military jets were "invading the contemplative silence" of their hermitage; and tribal leaders of the Salinan Nation, who protested that bombing noise would offend their buried ancestors.

- Arizona. The **Barry Goldwater** bombing range, located in a vast, arid region south of Phoenix, has hosted training for every F-16 pilot and many A-10 pilots since 1941. But the defenders of America's skies have been saddled with lawsuits by groups such as "**Defenders of Wildlife**" -- which forced military officials to become traffic cops for endangered lizards and Sonoran pronghorn antelope. Instead of concentrating on bombing sorties, our fighting men and women spend their time herding animals in the desert.

- Hawaii. The Army's Makua Military Reservation, used for live-fire training since World War II, has been hamstrung by environmental lawsuits seeking to protect the Oahu tree snail and the endangered Hawaiian hoary bat. The opposition campaign includes many groups with grievances against "imperialist" America.

- Florida. The **Pinecastle** bombing range, tucked into the Ocala National Forest, is under siege by a crazed group called "Forests Not Bombs." Chanting "Bears Deserve Quiet," the anti-military activists have been joined by "priestesses" from a witch organization ("Friends of Gaia"), indoctrinated schoolchildren crying "Save the gopher tortoises," and one Indian leader who asserted that "our forests should be used for peaceful communion with nature and personal spiritual renewal, not destructive practices of war preparation."

Foreign enemies invaded our borders and murdered over 3,000 men, women and children on Sept. 11. Yet, eco-obstructionists still care more about protecting peace, quiet and "biodiversity" in their elite enclaves than about supporting the troops who ensure the nation's peace in the first place. It's time for a cease-fire by these hostile green forces. Can't they see the forests for the trees?

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