

General Henk van den Breemen
Royal Dutch Marine Corps (Ret.)
Vingeiling 52
3271 VD Mijnsheezeland
Netherlands
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Dear Henk,

Thank you for our much appreciated conversations of the past week. During the mid-1990s, you and I discussed a broad range of issues and policies that reflected the social, political and financial pressures under which NATO Alliance members struggled. I am sorry that my recent public recollection of those discussions of 15 years ago inaccurately reflected your thinking on some specific social issues in the military. It is also regrettable that I allowed you to be pulled into a public debate. As a fellow Marine, I have the deepest respect for you personally and professionally. NATO and the Netherlands were well served by your leadership.

To be clear, the failure on the ground in Srebrenica was in no way the fault of the individual soldiers. The corporals and sergeants executed their orders based on the priorities of the political authorities. Unfortunately, the rules of engagement were developed by a political system with conflicting priorities and an ambivalent understanding of how to use the military. As we know, the consequences of those compromises were devastating.

I wish you the very best during this Easter season.


John J. Sheehan
General U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)