

The American Institute of Stress

COMBAT STRESS

Harnessing Post-Traumatic Stress for Service Members, Veterans, and First Responders

Volume 10 Number 3

Fall 2021

A photograph of Joe Biden at a podium, looking down with his hands clasped in prayer. The podium features the Presidential Seal of the United States. The background is a warm, golden-yellow color.

The Fall of Afghanistan

- Inside: *Dereliction of Duty* By Kathy Platoni • *Living Well Is The Best Revenge* By Alexis Artwohl
• *Marxism in America* By Charlie Bass • *Psychological Consequences of the Biden Afghanistan Debacle* By C. Alan Hopewell
• *Leave No Man Behind - R.I.P, July 4, 1776 to August 31, 2021* By Gary M. Jackson
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• *Commentary - The Nation's Longest War* By DJ Reyes



The mission of AIS is to improve the health of the community and the world by setting the standard of excellence of stress management in education, research, clinical care and the workplace. Diverse and inclusive, The American Institute of Stress educates medical practitioners, scientists, health care professionals and the public; conducts research; and provides information, training and techniques to prevent human illness related to stress.

AIS provides a diverse and inclusive environment that fosters intellectual discovery, creates and transmits innovative knowledge, improves human health, and provides leadership to the world on stress related topics.

COMBAT STRESS

We value opinions of our readers.

Please feel free to contact us with any comments, suggestions or inquiries. Email: editor@stress.org

Combat Stress magazine is written with our military Service Members, Veterans, first responders, and their families in mind. We want all of our members and guests to find contentment in their lives by learning about stress management and finding what works best for each of them. Stress is unavoidable and comes in many shapes and sizes. It can even be considered a part of who we are. Being in a state of peaceful happiness may seem like a lofty goal but harnessing your stress in a positive way makes it obtainable. Serving in the military or being a police officer, firefighter or paramedic brings unique challenges and some extraordinarily bad days. The American Institute of Stress is dedicated to helping you, our Heroes and their families, cope with and heal your mind and body from the stress associated with your careers and sacrifices.

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The American Institute of Stress

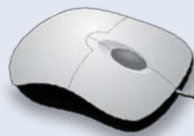
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Obtaining credentials from The American Institute of Stress is a designation that sets members apart as stress experts and reflects their commitment to the advancement of innovative and scientifically based stress management protocols. The AIS Seal and credentials inform the public that the certificate holder commands advanced knowledge of the latest stress research and stress management techniques. For physicians and other healthcare practitioners, it designates your practice as an advanced treatment center for stress-related illnesses.

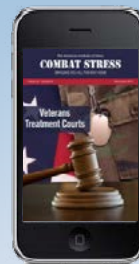


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The American Institute of Stress is a 501c3 non-profit organization, headquartered in Weatherford, Texas. We serve the global community through both online and in-person programs and classes. The Institute is dedicated to advancing understanding of the role of stress in health and illness, the nature and importance of mind/body relationships and how to use our vast innate potential for self-healing. Our paramount goal at the AIS is to provide a clearinghouse of stress related information to the general public, physicians, health professionals and lay individuals interested in exploring the multitudinous and varied effects of stress on our health and quality of life.

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This is the most difficult and heartbreaking issue we have ever published. It is also the most timely and the most inflammatory...perhaps necessarily so. We have postponed the release of our fall 2021 issue in order to release what we believe to be the sounding of an alarm and the firing of a warning shot. For those who may be offended by the contents of this issue, that was never our intention. What must be kept in mind is that we mean

to **educate and to sound a distress signal** regarding an extremely dangerous state of affairs, generated by the current administration, resulting in the most extraordinary debacle in US history. Please read on with an open mind. Please also know that we have assembled a panel of leading experts from the military and CIA sides of the house, all of whom are very much in the know about the substantiated facts

surrounding the fall of Afghanistan and the terrifying consequences that may follow. Thank you for understanding the spirit underlying the material presented in our Fall of Afghanistan issue of *Combat Stress*.

We profusely thank our extraordinary team of experts, all of whom have served this nation for decades in one form or another with pride, valor, honor and integrity and who stepped up to the plate in rapid succession to assure that the facts and the realities we are facing as Americans are disseminated to our readers.

- Alexis Artwohl, PhD
- Charlie Bass, MS, PhD, MD, FAIS, LTC (Ret), US Army
- C. Alan Hopewell, PhD, MP, ABPP, MAJ (Ret), US Army
- Gary M. Jackson, PhD
- Merissa Lee Kelley
- Captain Thomas McMurtry, US Army Special Forces, Retired Officer, Sinclair Community College Police Department
- DJ Reyes, MA, JD, COL (Ret), US Army

Your Editor,
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COL (Ret), US Army
COL, Ohio Military Reserve
Member, Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame
Dayton SWAT

STRESSED?

Stress is an emotional habit, an indicator there's a puppy upstairs [your brain], chewing up your house, your shoes and your underwear. Learn how to train the puppy and begin your path to stress elimination.

BEGIN TRAINING



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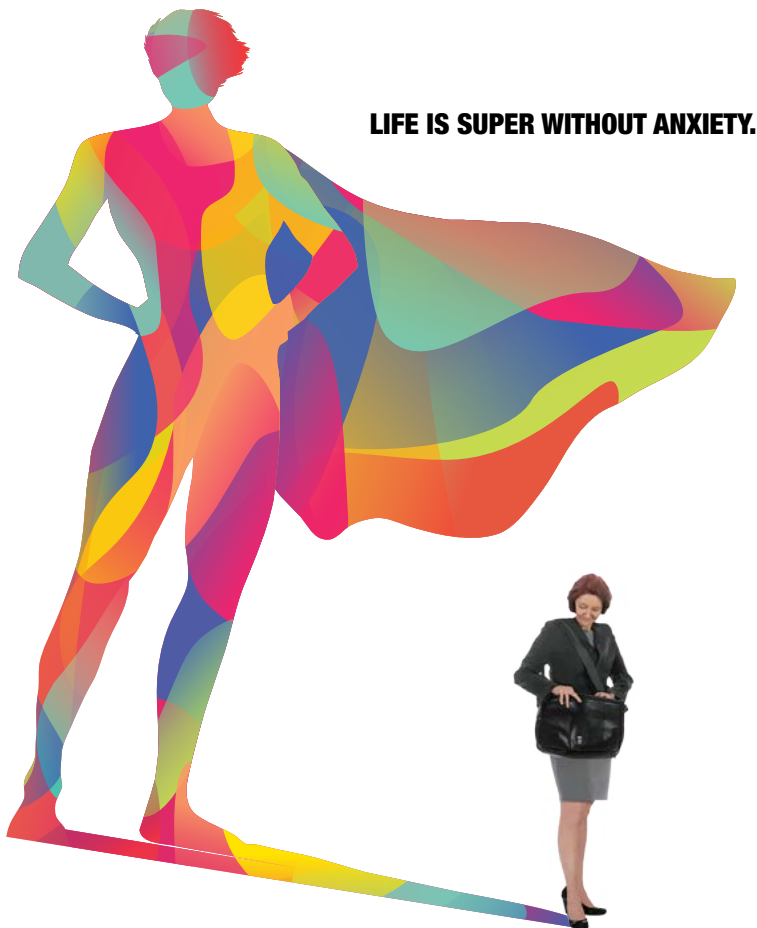
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THE COST OF STRESS.

The more we learn, the more vital our mission becomes.

The American Institute of Stress is the only organization in the world solely created and dedicated to study the science of stress and the advancement of innovative and scientifically based stress management techniques. AIS provides the latest evidence-based knowledge, research and management techniques for stress and stress-related disorders.

Groundbreaking insights and approaches. World-changing mission.

Hans Selye, MD, PhD (1907–1982), is known as the father of stress research. In the 1920s, Selye coined the term “stress” in the context of explaining his pioneering research into



the signs and symptoms of disease curiously common in the majority of people who were ill, regardless of the diagnoses. Selye’s concept of stress was revolutionary then, and it has only grown in significance in the century since he

began his work. Founded in 1978 at Dr. Selye’s request, the American Institute of Stress (AIS) continues his legacy of advancing the understanding of stress and its enormous

impacts on health and well-being worldwide, both on an individual and societal level.

A forthcoming AIS initiative – called **Engage. Empower. Educate.** – will leverage the latest research, tools and best practices for managing stress to make a difference in a world increasingly impacted by the effects of stress out of control. We hope you will consider supporting this critical outreach campaign.



[Click to view *The American Institute of Stress Case Statement*](#)

A campaign to Engage. Empower. Educate.

The AIS campaign will support three key initiatives:

Engage communities through public outreach



Improve the health and well-being of our communities and the world by serving as a nonprofit clearinghouse for information on all stress-related subjects.

The American Institute of Stress produces and disseminates a significant amount of evidence-based information, but there is a need to share this material with a wider audience in the U.S. and around the world.

Support for this initiative will provide funding to expand the organization's public outreach for its website and social media, documentary films, magazines, podcasts, blogs and courses.

Empower professionals through best practices



Establish credentials, best practices, and standards of excellence for stress management and fostering intellectual discovery among scientists, healthcare professionals, medical practitioners and others in related fields.

AIS provides DAIS (Diplomate, AIS) and FAIS (Fellow, AIS) credentials for qualified healthcare professionals.

The AIS seal means a practitioner has training and experience in stress management and access to the latest stress research and techniques. It designates their practices as advanced treatment centers for stress-related illnesses.

Support for this initiative will provide funding to continually update best practices in the field.

Educate all through the development and dissemination of evidence-based information



Develop and provide information, training and techniques for use in education, research, clinical care and the workplace. Some of the research-based information AIS develops and disseminates includes:

- Productions – *Mismatched: Your Brain Under Stress*, a six-part documentary featuring some of the world's leading experts on stress. Released in March 2021.
- Publications – *Contentment* magazine and *Combat Stress* magazine for service members, veterans and first responders.
- Podcasts, webinars and website resources – The free podcast series *Finding Contentment*



The American Institute of Stress

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Dereliction of Duty

By Kathy Platoni, PsyD, DAAPM, FAIS

COL (Ret), US Army

God have mercy on the United States. The abrupt withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan had disaster written all over it, precipitating a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions, rivaling its twin on the southern border. Add to this the gross negligence of an immense intelligence failure as the classified information concerning troop withdrawal was revealed by

megaphone to the entire world, precipitating the catastrophic fall of the Afghan government in little more than days and giving rise to the advance of the ruthless Taliban as a superpower. This has colossal defeat written all over it, launching a new rule of government that operates by systematic house to house executions as revenge killings, the mass slaughter of innocents, sexual enslavement, human rights violations, and tidal waves of refugees across the globe who may very well be delivering an entirely new and equally lethal brand of terrorism to American soil. The most fortunate will be those who do not survive unimaginable means of torture.¹ The recent video of a US sympathizer flying by his neck on the rails of a Blackhawk helicopter, is only the beginning. Rest in peace, "I will never leave a fallen comrade." This has been rendered meaningless.²

We are now sitting ducks for the Taliban, as we gifted them an entire army and a complete air force. Our weapons, aircraft, vehicles, and war machines are now in their hands, all \$86 billion worth, as we handed over the keys of three major airfields in Afghanistan to the enemy. What is to come will be incomprehensible. Is this part of the grand plan of the left to dismantle the United States, and the White House's contempt for the Constitution and our basic liberties, that have just sold our souls to the enemy with a rabid attack by the

deep state? We are treated to a daily dose of White House whoppers, which are piling up as our stability as a nation continues to erode. Dire warnings were ignored for months, as the Taliban began their advance across Afghanistan. It should also be mentioned that once released from the detention camps during the Obama years from Joint Task Force Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, 732 detainees were free to reconstitute as one of the most lethal terrorist forces in the Middle East, back to where they began 20 years ago and fueled with the promise of vengeance. (I was stationed at JTF-GTMO from 2003-2004. There were approximately 775 detainees at Camp America at that time.) We should have expected nothing less. The current American president has brought shame and dishonor to every single Service Member who has donned the uniform and served in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, every family who has lost loved ones in time of war, and every warrior who has sustained the wounds of war. There simply is no prosthesis for amputated spirits of this magnitude. This is the very lowest point in US history, as in our weakened and vulnerable state, we have been disgraced on the world stage as the laughingstock at the hands of a demented and incompetent president who has committed NO LESS than treason. His ineptitude and botched troop withdrawal has already cost 13 innocent lives. Biden's body bags will multiply by geometric progression.³





He has failed the American people as no other president preceding him. The hasty withdrawal of American forces has created a vacuum that has the potential to bring an end to life as we know it. At the hands of the Biden administration, we have effectively surrendered to the Taliban. His bungled plan of action has put the entire country at very great risk for far worse than what 9/11 brought 20 years ago, overshadowing this nation with a litany of dark days to come. He allowed the entire Afghan Army to collapse and closed down the Bagram Air Base, which he was advised absolutely not to do by military authorities. Two more airbases followed as American troops were forced to desert and abandon them, as if the War in Afghanistan never really happened. It's time to lay out the welcome mat for them once again.

Add to this the treasonous acts of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Shame, General Mark

Milley, who would sell his soul to the devil to maintain his position as the highest ranking military officer in these entire United States for the purpose of self-interest and self-advancement. "This pursuit of partisan politics....are a violation of an officer's sacred duty and have no place in the United States military."⁴ In a disgraceful and unprecedented act of insubordination, General Milley conducted secret communications with the Chinese government, promising to provide them advance warning if President Trump ordered an attack on their communist regime believing that Trump was in a state of cognitive deterioration.⁵ Unfortunately, he named the wrong president, whose cognitive abilities have repeatedly demonstrated his gross incompetence and negligence of the office to which he has been entrusted. Once found out, the despotic Milley should have resigned

immediately. Regardless, he should be tried for treason for acting behind the back of an American president to offer the promise of notification of an attack on our most powerful enemy; this in order to save this country from Donald Trump....and his self-appropriated status as chief negotiator, while attempting to seize power from the White House. Isn't this what insurrection looks like?

During General Milley's testimony before Congress on 28 September 2021, this turncoat had the audacity to blame the president for refusing the advice of the Joint Chiefs under oath. US Central Command's General McKenzie seconded this, and the fact is that both recommended leaving 2,500 sustainment forces in place. There will be no repercussions for these Pentagon perjurers, who would stop at nothing to preserve and promote their careers. The president, of course, denied that he was ever provided this information. In other words, zip accountability rules. No one will ever pay for the incalculable damages done to national security or to the lives so unnecessarily lost. Somebody needs to tear all those ill-gotten medals off the uniforms of these traitors and to demand their immediate resignations, not to exclude Secretary of Defense Austin. The catastrophic failure of the withdrawal from Afghanistan has left Americans stranded behind enemy lines who are desperately trying to get out before it's too late. It may already be just that (<https://www.foxnews.com/live-news/afghanistan-withdrawal-milley-austin>).⁶

And here is the worst of it. As a survivor of the November 2009 Fort Hood Massacre, this is one of the most egregious outcome of

the Biden administration's global failure. The shooter took another day on the world's stage to proclaim that his Taliban brothers had won, singing high praises to the All-Mighty Allah and congratulating them on their victory over those who despise supreme Shariah law.⁷ Live from his cell on death row, he directed his attorney to forward his handwritten letter to the Taliban leadership, electrified that the Biden administration is now willing to negotiate with them. We should live in fear that this could really happen at the hands of a tyrannical and incompetent presidency.

How much time do we have left? Is it time to fly the American flag upside down as a national distress call? The Biden administration is well on its way to issuing a death warrant to the United States.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Kathy Platoni has been a practicing clinical psychologist for more than 39 years and maintains her private practice in Centerville, Ohio. In service of her country and as an Army Reserve clinical psychologist, she has deployed on four occasions in time of war. Dr. Platoni served as commander of the 1972nd Medical Detachment (Combat Stress Control) at Guantanamo Bay Cuba from 2003-2004, where combat stress control became a critical element of the Joint Task Force mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in the Global War on Terrorism. Having volunteered to return to active duty within weeks of her redeployment from Joint Task Force-GTMO, Dr. Platoni deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, holding the position of Deputy Commander of Clinical Services for the 55th Medical Company (CSC) in Baghdad and seven subsequent locations, finally as Officer in Charge of Team Ar Ramadi, situated the seat of the insurgency and during times of intensive combat. Dr. Platoni was last deployed to the combat theater of Afghanistan from 2009 through late 2010 with the 467th Medical Detachment (Combat Stress Control) in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. As a survivor of the tragic Ft. Hood Massacre in November of 2009, she is an ardent activist for reconsideration of this shooting incident as an act of terrorism to assure that the wounded and the families of the deceased are awarded long overdue benefits and was very instrumental in the awarding of the Purple Heart Medal to the Fort Hood wounded and to the families of those who lost their lives on that tragic day.



Dr. Platoni is a graduate of the School of Professional Psychology of Nova University (now Nova Southeastern University) in Davie, Florida. She held the position of Army Reserve Clinical Psychology Consultant to the Chief, Medical Service Corp (Chief Psychologist for the Army Reserve pro bono) for six years and is a graduate of the US Army Command and General Staff College. Dr. Platoni retired from the US Army with the rank of Colonel in October of 2013.

Two landmark books, written and edited by Dr. Raymond Scurfield and Dr. Platoni on the subject of war trauma, *Expanding the Circle of Healing~Trauma in Its Wake and Healing War Trauma~A Handbook of Creative Approaches*, were published in 2012. She was awarded Diplomate status by the American Academy

of Pain Management and was recently appointed Fellow of the American Institute of Stress and distinguished membership in the Institute of Traumatic Stress.

Since the "9/11" tragedy and attacks on the United States, Dr. Platoni voluntarily deployed to New York City on two occasions in order to provide disaster mental health and critical incident stress debriefing services to members of the New York City Police Department. In 2017, she deployed to hurricane-ravaged Florida to provide disaster mental health services with the American Red Cross and in May and June of 2019, in support of tornado relief in the aftermath of 15 tornadoes that devastated the area of Southwest Ohio in which she resides. She currently serves as the Dayton SWAT psychologist and Mental Health Advisor to the Dayton Hostage Negotiation Team.

For her professional contributions to the field of psychology and decades of humanitarian service, Dr. Platoni was awarded a lifetime achievement award by her alma mater, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, in 2008 and was selected for the very prestigious Dayton's Ten Top Women Award for the Class of 2012. She was awarded the Legacy Award for community service and volunteerism in the Southwest Ohio area in April of 2013. She was awarded the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious service by the United States Army on 19 July 2014. Dr. Platoni was the recipient of the 2016 IVAT Returning Veterans Resiliency in Response to Trauma Award. This award is given by the Institute on Violence, Abuse and Trauma (IVAT) to a veteran who has experienced specific trauma in war and whose efforts and advocacy have had a notably restorative impact on a traumatized population. Dr. Platoni was inducted into the **Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame** in November of 2019 for her numerous contributions to the Veteran and law enforcement communities. In March of 2020, she was selected as the recipient of both the **2020 and 2021 Best of Dayton Award for Psychologists**. In November of 2020, Dr. Platoni was a recipient of the **Ford Oval of Honor Award**, again, for almost four decades of military and tireless community service.

In March of 2015, COL Platoni was sworn in as a member of the 4th Civil Support and Sustainment Brigade, Ohio Military Reserve; back in uniform for her 39th year, this time as Brigade Psychologist for State Defense Forces.

Living Well Is The Best Revenge

By Alexis Artwohl, PhD

We have been here before many times in human history. For thousands of years, warfighters have stepped up to the plate only to be betrayed, vilified, and forgotten by the politicians and citizens they fought to protect. The recipients of betrayal and ingratitude include all ranks, from generals to privates, ancient kings to modern politicians. Many risked all, including their “lives, fortunes, and sacred honor.” Some failed, some succeeded, and

many were kicked to the curb regardless of the outcome. In fact, the admiration some warfighters earned by their success was the very thing that caused the betrayal. The envy, greed, and quest for power of others would not tolerate their popularity. Some become scapegoats for the mistakes of others, who shift blame rather than owning up to their own failures. Some warfighters are rejected because those who sent them to fight do not want to be reminded of the violence and suffering of war.

Humans have always been pawns in ongoing power struggles. Warfighters are among the most visible, being moved around the chessboard by power brokers for noble or ignoble purposes. They are also among the most tragic as they risk life, limb, and sanity from the horrors they experience. When their sacrifices seem pointless, the loss and grief are immeasurably amplified. Behind the sacrificed warfighters are many more casualties. These include the families and friends of the warfighters. Many wars cause death and suffering to far more civilians than

the warfighters directly involved in the conflict. There are no truer words than “War is hell.”

As an American warfighter, you come from a long legacy of fighting for noble causes: independence from a despotic monarchy, ending slavery and holding a nation together, rescuing the world twice in global conflagrations fighting fascism, and the ongoing battle against the world’s most brutal and bloody movement:

America’s warfighters fight to preserve the best way of life the world has ever seen through their devotion to their families, communities, and to each other.

communism. Terrorism has always been with humanity in one form or another. These battles will never end. Some wars are successful, and others are not. The failures are not the fault of America’s warfighters, but the sociopathic and feckless

politicians who make the backroom deals, use the tragedy of war to advance personal gain and nefarious political agendas, as they are naïve and incompetent.

War, and the causes leading up to it, reveal the dark side of human nature. War can also bring forth the best of human nature. Amid chaos, hate, betrayal, and cowardice, inspiring acts of courage, love, devotion, and nobility emerge. America’s warfighters fight



to preserve the best way of life the world has ever seen through their devotion to their families, communities, and to each other. It can bring forth fierce love and courage not experienced by those living comfortable lives, oblivious to the constant threats against which others protect them. Facing the challenges of warfighting is transformative, and for many, the lessons learned are worth the terrible effort it took to gain them.

Grief and rage over betrayed sacrifices are normal. As we watch America's enemies mocking the debacle in Afghanistan, promulgated by the latest example of failed political leadership, what is the best response for the warfighters who gave so much to try and make the world a better, safer place? I suggest that "Living well is the best revenge" sums it up. Your enemies at home and abroad like nothing better than to watch you suffer. Defying them by thriving and living to fight another day will be your ultimate victory.

Thriving and fighting will be different for everyone. Some Veterans are becoming politicians, pundits, and political activists, fighting to hold failed leadership accountable. Others use their warrior skills as they serve in public safety and volunteer work. Simply living the good life and enjoying friends, family, and peace is a richly earned reward that your enemies will resent.

However, you do it, take the devotion, loyalty, and love you learned in the crucible of battle and use it to make your life, our lives, better. Remember that the vast majority of your fellow citizens appreciate and honor your efforts and sacrifices, regardless of the failed follies of politicians. Our hearts break when we hear of Veteran suicides and other tragic outcomes. Reach out to friends and family. Veterans' organizations are on standby waiting for you. Through them you can help yourself and serve others. We need you still. Help us win the battle at home.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Alexis Artwohl has been a behavioral science consultant to law enforcement for thirty years. Now retired from clinical practice, she provided traumatic incident debriefings to many police officers and their families during her years as a clinical and police psychologist. Her training for the law enforcement and the concealed carry communities is based on research and the hard-won street wisdom that hundreds of officers have shared with her. Her book *Deadly Force Encounters, Second Edition*, written with co-author Loren Christensen, is available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Dr. Artwohl is a military brat whose father was a WWII fighter pilot, and she is married to a Veteran. She provided treatment to combat Veterans during her internship at a VA hospital and her private practice. She thanks all of America's Warriors for their service.



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Marxism in America

By LTC (Ret) Charlie Bass, MS, PhD, MD, FAIS

The last several weeks have seen tumultuous upsets in global power shifts, public perception of political figures, and worldwide population stability. The violence in Afghanistan following the pullout of Coalition Forces has left a deep rift in those who “had a dog in the fight,” such as this writer did in 2012-2013 at Camp Sabalu-Harrison in Bagram. It has also ushered in a lack of faith in political leadership that leaves many Americans and members of the Free

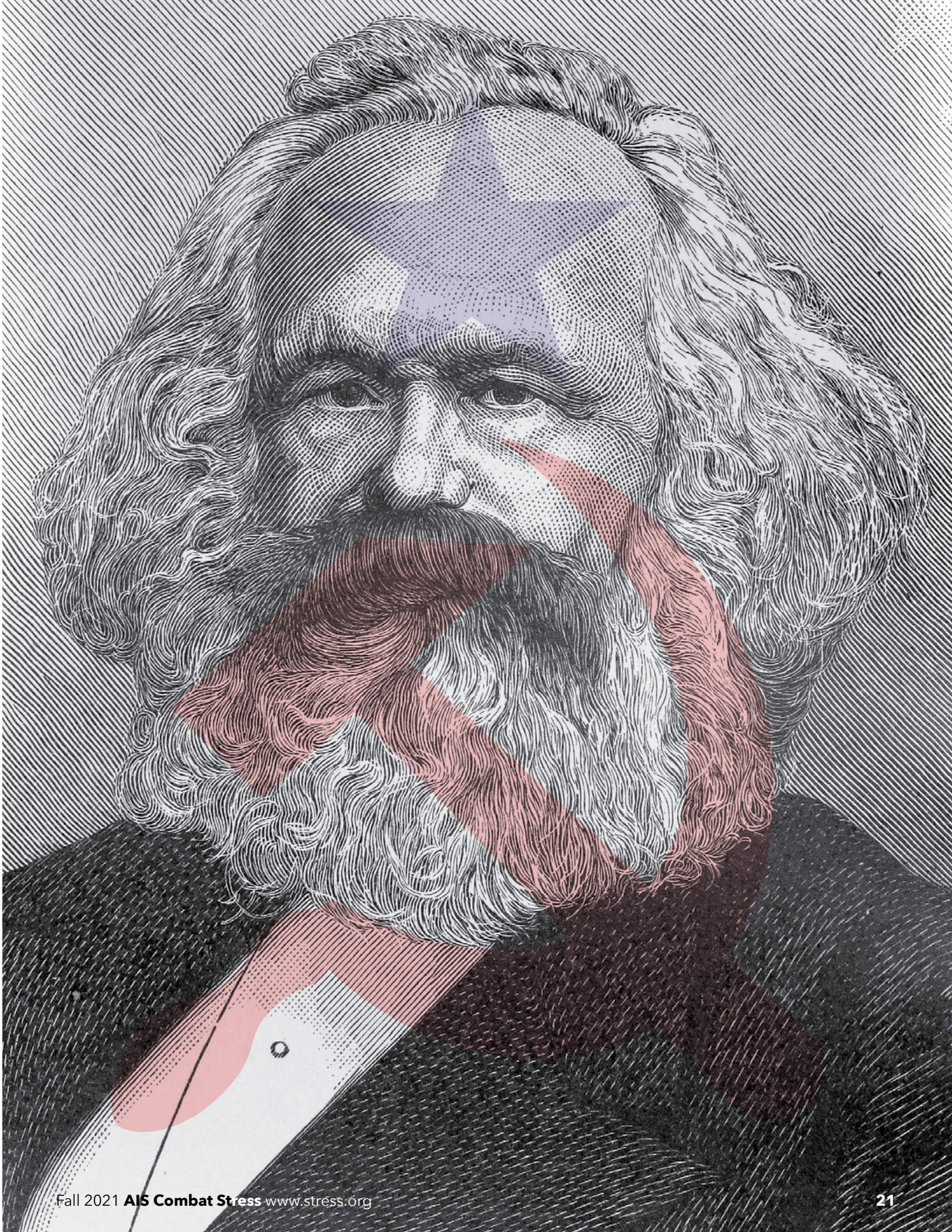
The last several weeks have seen tumultuous upsets in global power shifts, public perception of political figures, and worldwide population stability. The violence in Afghanistan following the pullout of Coalition Forces has left a deep rift in those who “had a dog in the fight,” such as this writer did in 2012-2013 at Camp Sabalu-Harrison in Bagram. It has also ushered in a lack of faith in political leadership that leaves many Americans and members of the Free World reeling. While a slow solemn, ceremonial salute goes out to those whose lives were lost in Afghanistan, attention must be given to matters perhaps not as luminous, but still pressing for those concerned.

My wife’s friend called last month from Washington State, where she was thinking of leaving. She explained that people on the side of the road and on freeway overpasses are throwing things at motorists and incidents have gone well beyond cotton balls and paper tissue. In 161 incidents across King County, items thrown include shopping carts, chairs, cinder blocks, and propane tanks.¹ She went on to say that, since the protests surrounding the last presidential election, such incidents – and numerous other crimes – have been common and, “...Seattle just isn’t the same.” Thousands of people live alongside the I-5 and I-90 interstate highways in tents. She wants to leave the west coast (her rise in car insurance premiums alone would have been enough to motivate her) and move to

Texas and its right-leaning conservatism. This is hardly uncommon, but many established Texans are becoming weary of people leaving leftist, liberal states that have depleted themselves of funding while allowing crime to rage rampant, establishing residency in Texas, then voting for the same profiles of liberal, leftist candidates they chose that got the west coast in their mess in the first place. It has led to popular merchandizing of the slogan, “Don’t California my Texas.”

Meanwhile, we see protestors in Cuba calling for greater freedoms in the regime of Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel’s communist authoritarianism. Shortages in gas, electricity, medical supplies, and vaccines have been cited and protests quickly turned violent and lethal after security forces were ordered to disperse the protestors.² Only 90 miles away in Florida, Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar – whose parents were Cuban exiles – noted that the island’s government responded by shutting off the Internet to better control the information that the 11 million island residents receive.²

Black Lives Matter, ever ready to exploit the incident for their own unabashedly and avowedly Marxist means, has condemned the people of the United States for Cuba’s economic struggles.² In their spin on the matter, U.S. economic and supply embargoes are the central cause of Cuba’s woes and BLM is ready and willing to show solidarity with their communist allies. BLM





has not commented on why they assign no blame whatsoever to China for failing to help their communist brethren. Finally, it looks like the American people are waking up to realize the truth about the Black Lives Matter organization and their hidden agenda.

China's history saw strong condemnation of capitalist imperialism with Chairman Mao's Little Red Book (1964),³ in which he denounces capitalism over 30 times and imperialism over 70 times. The irony is that China is now on the brink of colonizing throughout the Caribbean through capitalist means to fund, fuel, and further Chinese imperialism (starting with the Chinese invasion and annexation of Tibet in October of 1950). Jamaica has received JMD \$88 billion (roughly US \$570 million) in Chinese loans for infrastructure development. The worry of many - and not unfounded - is that, should Jamaica falter on their loan (an all-but-inevitable outcome), China will seize key economic areas of the island.⁴ The phrase "Chinese colonialism"

seems a hot topic on the Internet at the moment, but the idea of loaning money at interest is central to capitalism, which makes many wonder if China will have to turn its back on Chairman Mao if they continue bank loans. Expanding a country's borders is the very heart of imperialism, leaving us imagining what Chairman Mao would say if he could see such behavior among his comrades today, with over 200 Chinese fishing boats anchoring in a show of dominance over Whitsun Reef near the Philippines in April⁵ as well as the legacy of the Spratly Islands midway between Brunei, Vietnam, and the Philippines, which have been the subject of aggressive Chinese land-grabbing and reclamation since at least 1995.

In any case, communism is founded on the belief of communal ownership of all property. Why is Cuba not being aided by the other communist countries of China, Laos, and Vietnam? Is there no inter-dependence of communist nations? The question reaches

relevance when considering these words from Karl Marx, Father of Communism:

"It is a universal revolution and will, accordingly, have a universal range."⁶

The reader will please keep in mind that the ultimate goal of communism is world domination. However, the ideology of communism is a failure. President Ronald Reagan was quoted to say from the podium:

"Two Russians are walking down the street, and one says, 'Comrade, have we reached the highest state of communism?'

'Oh, no,' the other replies. 'Things are going to get a lot worse.'"⁷

Only slightly better is the oft-repeated joke from the liberal politicians:

"Well, that wasn't TRUE communism."

Another idea of Marx was that communism starts with the education of children. His words were:

"All children will be educated in state establishments from the time when they can do without the first maternal care."⁸

Doing without maternal care is one way of saying the family would be abolished and the children would become instruments of the state. To put it another way:

"The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement (private gain and ownership of property) vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital."⁹

To this must be put forward the wise words of this writer's great-grandmother, Mrs. Jessie Kenan Wilder Jones, writing in a 1934 letter to

her daughters, *"No nation can rise above her families."* Karl Marx would have found a worthy debate in her domestic policies.

While agendas of communist education have been slowly creeping into American society, it does seem one positive effect of the quarantine was to put education back into the home through online schooling. Parents were finally getting a taste of what their children were being told by the educators of our society.¹⁰ The gist of it seems to boil down to some educators spending more time on leftist social justice agendas than on education.

That, of course, is a warm-up for the natural course of a decades-long river of revisionist history leading to the new buzzword of American education: Critical Race Theory.

Exactly what Critical Race Theory (CRT) is and what it means to the classrooms of our nation seem to be different things. However, most will agree the core of CRT is, "...that race is a social construct, and that racism is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also something embedded in legal systems and policies."¹¹ So, racial minorities have faced and continue to face exploitation and oppression from a racial majority. This is in keeping with the Hegelian-Marxist notion that there is one class of oppressors and one class of the oppressed.¹² As such, it plays upon - and further creates - a rift in society, painting one group of people as victims while demonizing another group, the divisions all being made along racial lines.

Surely this writer's head is not the only one shaking and askance. Demonizing a group of people based on skin color? That could never have any harmful effect, could it?



Also, it gives a picture of the world around us while looking through a straw. The theory seems to state that the White American majority (76 percent of the U.S. population)¹³ has some non-specific, amorphous privilege while the Black American minority (less than 14 percent of the U.S. population)¹³ is kept underprivileged. In order for the CRT idea to work, one must state that any non-White race is automatically underprivileged.

To this narrative, mention should be made of Wadie P. Deddeh. Having been born in Baghdad and raised Chaldean, he left Iraq when he was just shy of his 27th birthday in 1947 and came by ship to New York. He settled first in Detroit. As a Chaldean (an Aramaic Christian minority totaling less than three percent of the population of Iraq), he faced discrimination in his native Iraq and in the United States. However, by educating himself and putting himself in a position to work and solve the issues of the day, he became the first Iraqi-American elected as a state senator and is credited with creating the California Department of Transportation in 1972.^{14, 15}

The adherents of CRT surely find Senator Deddeh's story...inconvenient. As a minority of a minority, the CRT model predicts he would

have come to no good end in the United States, but he rose to prominence and his work proved beneficial to millions. Note that an additional corollary of CRT is that White Americans are predicted to succeed, but the reality is that over nine percent - in the neighborhood of 21 million - of White Americans are living below the poverty level.¹⁶

Even the young people of our nation are catching onto the idea that political programming has no place in federally funded schools. Brad Taylor is a high school student in District 196 south of Minneapolis, Minnesota, who chastised the administration in a school board meeting recently, saying his school, "... is quickly becoming a place where promoting activism is actually more important than promoting education."¹⁷

Is it clear how CRT bids people to look at **We the People of the United States** through a straw? It seems the very antithesis of the Rev. (Dr.) Martin Luther King's words, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."¹⁸

Please let each century show that we were wiser than the century before.

Again, mainstream media with its set-piece agenda of yellow journalism must take credit here. There are some who believe what they see in the news whole-heartedly, but this writer is not listed in that group. Having been in the middle of news stories more than a few times in over five decades - and having trained and worked as a journalist - there is often a wide separation between the actual event and what gets reported in the news. Readers will please continue to evaluate media reports with a critical eye and question the story. Are facts being presented or is it an editorial article? This writer produces a mixture of the two. Are both sides of a story being

presented? The endeavor here is to try and find the under-represented side of the coin. Is the editor picking the news to suit his tastes? For example, when a big news story like the debacle in Afghanistan comes out, does the editor instead put a heavy focus on celebrity break-ups and babies? Remember that journalists work for an editor who tells them what the story will be. Articles that do not meet the company model will be rejected.

Accordingly, it was surprising to this writer to see even CNN reporting that Americans are losing faith in President Biden's administration,¹⁹ leaving this writer to wonder if reporters such as Harry Enten may be out of work soon as he

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weaves a story that is hardly a good fit with liberal news media.

So, when a reporter sees an event that is a poor fit for the model, a common reporter's tactic is to label this B-side of the album "propaganda." An example would be when former President Trump was awake at 3:00 am to greet returning hostages; reporters labeled the event as an exploitative measure of President Trump to curry political gain.²⁰

On the other side of the Big Yellow Machine, reporters politely covered the bloody pullout from Afghanistan and President Biden refusing questions from reporters before he returned to his vacation.²¹ One might hypothesize what the

media would have done to President Biden had he been a Republican.

WE THE PEOPLE were not amused. In the words of Pastor John Hagee of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, "Our President is demonstrating weak and pathetic leadership and **WE THE PEOPLE** are tired of it" (emphasis added, but the pastor received a tumultuous applause from the 5,000-plus congregation).²² Our ability to think for ourselves - rather than simply consuming what is fed to us - is a hallmark of the American mind. To put it another way, as may be found etched into the original main building of the Central Intelligence Agency in McLean, Virginia (and at the insistence of Director

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Allen Dulles), *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*²³

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LTC (Ret) US Army, Charlie Bass served in the aftermath of hurricanes, a tornado, a terrorist bombing, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan during 28 years with the U.S. Army. In 2014, he retired with his wife to Corpus Christi, Texas.



Psychological Consequences of the Biden Afghanistan Debacle

By C. Alan Hopewell, PhD, MP, ABPP, MAJ (Ret), US Army

I realized in 1973 that we were going to abandon South Vietnam and that terrible things would happen. It was beyond frustrating, deeply depressing, a stain on the nation, and there wasn't a damn thing I could do about it. So, I worked hard to stop thinking about it and when Saigon fell, I just felt pretty numb about it. I went on with my life until many years later, when I got involved with running a charity for disabled ARVN Veterans still living in dire poverty and discrimination over there.

"Afghan Vets are now undergoing the same frustrations, sadness, and feelings of depression that most of us did back then, but they and we are now far worse off than when Saigon fell. Why? Because by the end of that time, the communist drive to take over all of Southeast Asia had worn out. The country of Vietnam was exhausted and simply needed to rebuild and China wasn't pushing them to go anywhere anymore (to conquer more of Southeast Asia). Yes, two dominoes fell, Laos and Cambodia, but Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia were safe.

"With this victory of the Taliban, now all of jihadist Islam is strengthened, all our enemies are rejoicing, and all our allies now look at us with grave doubts. It is impossible to predict, with any accuracy, the long-term fallout of all this, but there is no doubt that the consequences are devastating ones for any civilized country. God help us. We Vietnam Veterans can only reach out if we can find a way to offer the message to Afghan War Veterans that we understand and identify with them."¹

Seeing the news of the betrayal of not only an entire country and generation of Veterans, as well as the revulsion of seeing the thousands now "left behind," another Operation Enduring Freedom Veteran, specifically described her "visceral" reaction to the horrors unfolding in that betrayed nation. COL Kathy Platoni, Army Veteran who served with the 467th

Medical Detachment (Combat Stress Control) in Afghanistan, stated emotionally that "Just seeing the images of people clamoring to get on board departing evacuation flights and falling to their deaths in the process, left her panic-stricken with the uncertainty of what would be faced by American troops, the Afghani's who came to our aid, the interpreters, the Afghan people?"² COL Platoni stated that during her time in Afghanistan, the Taliban were to be greatly feared and that torture and murder characterized the means by which they took revenge upon their enemies. She also stated that it was horrifying and unexpected to witness the fall of Afghanistan to the very enemy we went to war against in such rapid succession as the United States withdrew.

Such events have struck many of our Vietnam Veterans as being reminiscent of the panic and the lifelong traumata which Vietnamese survivors and Veterans confronted after that betrayed country fell to communist forces in 1973. Years of unrelenting warfare. Billions of dollars spent. Thousands of lives lost. A nation which was relatively free of the enemy and relatively stable when America transferred security operations to the national forces....all of this followed by a humiliating invasion and rapid conquest of the country, with Americans fleeing in panic, with horrific pictures of hysteria on planes and helicopters. This is what our Vietnam Veterans



experienced. This is what our Afghanistan Veterans are now experiencing.

Although that war may seem to belong to a past history of long ago, over three million American Servicemen and women served in Vietnam.³ Most are still living, so easily over two million of our fellow citizens retain vivid personal memories of their service and of this betrayal. These Veterans also continue to voice the ultimate question, the same one that will remain a plague upon their lives of Veterans of the War in Afghanistan.... "Was it worth it?" This article will therefore review those similarities and shed light upon the potential psychological traumata which are expected to occur for some of the Afghan population, now also left behind in the clutches of a 7th century- minded fundamentalist religious culture ruled by jihad and terror.

COL (RET) Kathy Platoni, PsyD spent a year in Afghanistan from 2009 to 2010 leading one of several around-the-clock combat stress control clinics under the auspices of the 467th MED DET (CSC). This often led her on dangerous missions to remote parts of the country, "outside the wire." Dr. Platoni was deployed as Officer in Charge of Team Wilson, Kandahar Province, and Camp Phoenix in Kabul, Afghanistan. With concerns over the human rights of people remaining in the country and of the safety of those who aided the U.S. in its mission, Platoni said she thinks of a man who helped the 4th Infantry Division I with whom she was embedded, as an interpreter. Not wanting to mention his name for the sake of his safety, Platoni said she worries about the "wonderful soul" who "did what he did at risk to his life and that of his family as well," she said. "I don't even want to think about what may become of him."² Platoni recalled that she worked towards

assisting him in obtaining his visa for travel to the U.S. 11 long years ago, but is unsure whether he was ever able to relocate.

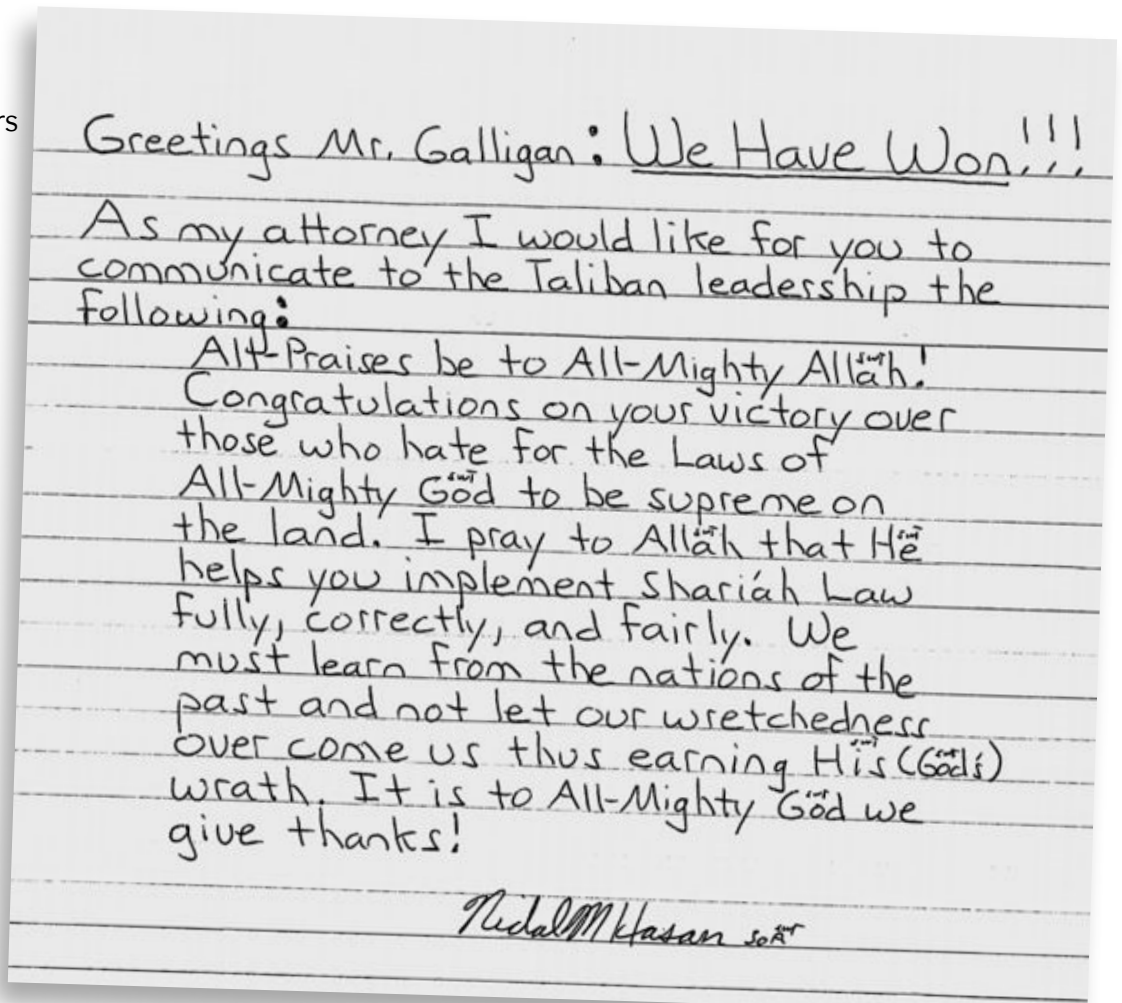
As a psychologist, Platoni asserted that this is a challenging time for her many clients who are Veterans. "Many of them feel betrayed that they sacrificed so much," she said, "and that 'everything we did was for nothing.'" Platoni recommends that Veterans who served in Afghanistan re-connect to discuss and process what they are confronting, admitting that this is "crisis time" for so many who served there over the last 20 years. She also asserts that this is because, the Taliban's resurgence does not diminish the service that she and the thousands of other troops provided. "Our sacrifices were absolutely not in vain," Platoni said. "We did what we did with the hope that we'd have the best outcome imaginable....and this is out of our hands. This takes nothing away from what we provided and sacrificed."²

By tragic coincidence, COL Platoni's path crossed with that of the author, MAJ [RET] C. Alan Hopewell, PhD, as he was training the 467th Medical Detachment (Combat Stress Control) in psychological and brain injury issues prior to their deployment to Afghanistan from Ft. Hood, Texas. Unfortunately, this training was cut short by the terrorist jihadist attack at Ft. Hood, which left three of the 467th dead, one in Platoni's arms, and five wounded. The perpetrator of that attack, Nidal Malik Hasan, has now formally congratulated both the Taliban and the Biden administration for the ease in which the Taliban toppled the Afghan government and took over the country. In a letter 'obtained' by the *Washington Examiner*,⁴ the man who called himself a "soldier of Allah" and shouted "Allahu Akbar!" while murdering

fellow troops and currently sits behind bars on death row at Fort Leavenworth, declared "We Have Won!" and congratulated Taliban leaders for their victory after 20 years of American and international forces keeping the organization out of power following the September 11, 2001, attacks. "Congratulations on your victory over those who hate for the Laws of All-Mighty God to be supreme on the land," Hasan wrote in the letter, dated August 18th of

2021. "I pray to Allah that He helps you implement Shariah Law full, correctly and fairly."

Both COL Platoni and the author have had extensive experience in working with both military personnel, as well as civilians exposed to horrific and extensive trauma, while performing their duties in combat theaters. The author possesses wide ranging familiarity with the post-trauma of another group of Veterans who were significantly betrayed by their country and who often felt that their service "had all been for nothing." This is due to his first active duty assignments as an Army Clinical Psychologist shortly following the Vietnam War and as an author of a history chapter of Army



Psychology⁵ and a book chapter on the nature of post-traumatic stress disorder.⁶ Traumatized survivors included not only the Vietnam Veterans who saw South Vietnam fall to communist forces, but also the frantic people who were beaten from and who fell from helicopters, in addition to the thousands of "boat evacuees." During his deployment to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the author also treated traumatized Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division, the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Infantry Divisions, the 10th Mountain Division, the 101st Airborne Division, and a large number of other associated and subordinate units. He also performed additional research with civilian casualties in one of the worst hit areas

of the country - the "Sunni Triangle of Death." These research efforts were further accomplished during some of the most vicious fighting in Iraq - the Battle of Sadr City.

Both COL Platoni and the author have been struck by the similarities between all of these groups: Vietnam Veterans who felt betrayed when South Vietnam fell to an enemy when this was completely preventable, Soldiers who fought in the current Global War on Terrorism are now witnessing an almost identical catastrophic debacle and civilians and native citizens who worked for American forces, such as interpreters, among other dedicated Afghans, were also abandoned and betrayed.

Two groups in particular, which can be compared to our current troops and civilians in Afghanistan, were studied intensively prior to the fall of that country. The trauma experienced by these two groups are directly comparable to what both Soldiers and civilians are experiencing this very moment in the debacle still occurring in Afghanistan. The first group included active duty Soldiers, primarily from the 1st Cavalry Division and the 4th Infantry Division, both of which had been deployed from Ft. Hood Texas between the years 2006 through 2010. The second group included Iraqi civilians and some military interpreters who had been subjected to similar horrors of

MENTAL CAMOUFLAGE



MY MIND GONE AWOL
Peggy Simpson

James experienced multiple traumatic events, beginning from the time he was a young boy, culminating with his military service in the Ulster Defense Regiment (UDR) in Northern Ireland. Upon his discharge from the UDR, James became a breakfast chef. However, the impact of all that led up to his CPTSD left him emotionally crippled and unable to hold down a steady job.

In addition to professional counseling provided by the National Health Service (NHS), writing about the many causations that ultimately left James with CPTSD has helped tremendously to loosen the power this disease has held over him for so many years.

James is now able to walk alongside others in the military who are on the road to healing. He looks forward to speaking into the lives of those who are suffering with PTSD.

• Available through Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Google Play and iTunes. •

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMylOAM4CY>

war and who were evaluated during a March 2008 MEDCAP mission in Mahmudiyah, Iraq.⁷ These military civic action programs are types of military operations which are designed to assist a war-torn area by using the capabilities and resources of a military force to conduct long-term programs or short-term projects for medical or civil aid. These types of operations generally included: dental civic action programs (DENTCAP), engineering civic action programs (ENCAP), medical civic action programs (MEDCAP), and veterinarian civic action programs (VETCAP). The U.S. military will normally conduct these types of operations at the invitation of a host nation.⁸

In June of 2006, the author, after volunteering to return to active duty for the War on Terror, assumed his duties as the Officer in Charge of what turned out to be the largest psychiatric outpatient clinic in the world at the time (The Resilience and Restoration Center at Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center at Ft. Hood Texas.) At the direction of the Hospital Commander (COL and later BG Lorree Sutton,) the author conducted PTSD and brain injury surveillance and research on returning combat Veterans, generally those who served in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). This eventually included more than 6000 combat Veterans at Ft. Hood.^{9,10} While in Iraq as support of the Surge of U. S. forces from 2007 to 2008, the 785th Medical Detachment; 56th Medical Battalion (Combat Stress Control) saw more patients in total than any other Combat Stress Unit during OIF (COL Robert Evans, personal communication, 2010).

In the context of the Iraq War, the Surge referred to United States President George W.

Bush's 2007 increase in the number of American troops in order to provide security to Baghdad and Al Anbar Governorate.¹¹ In response to continuing unrest in Iraq, President Bush ordered the deployment of more than 20,000 soldiers into Iraq (five additional brigades), and sent the majority of them into Baghdad.¹² The President described the overall objective as establishing a "unified, democratic federal Iraq that can govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself, and is an ally in the War on Terror."¹³ The major element of the strategy was a change in focus for the US military "to help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help them protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security."¹⁴ The President stated that the Surge would then provide the time and conditions conducive to reconciliation between communities.

As the name designated Traumatic Brain Injury Consultant, Multinational Force, Operation Iraqi Freedom, the author conducted in-country research on an additional 2000 to 3000 wounded Soldiers as well as the aforementioned MEDCAP mission, the latter of which took place in Mahmudiyah in the renowned "*Sunni Triangle of Death*."⁷ "Name designated" means that the author was designated by name by the Multinational Force, Operation Iraqi Freedom, in coordination with the U.S. Army Psychology consultant COL Bruce Crow, to be the Traumatic Brain Injury Consultant during the author's tour of duty in Iraq. The "*Sunni Triangle of Death*" was the area widely known as one of the most dangerous areas in all of Iraq. This was the description given to a rural area south of Baghdad which

was marked by a rough geographical triangle and which included the three “triangle” cities of Yusufiyah, Latifiyah and Mahmudiyah. For example, when the U.S. Marine Corps 2nd Battalion entered Yusufiyah in the middle of September 2004, one of the first things they laid eyes upon was an Iraqi police officer hanging from a tree. There was a sign hanging from him indicating that “This is what happens when you help U.S. Forces.” Similar sights may already be underway throughout Afghanistan, and reports of savage executions and retribution have already begun to surface.¹⁵

Because of the fighting in and around the “*Triangle of Death*,” the area was targeted for special assistance during the 2008 Surge. The primary unit stationed in the area was the 3-320th Field Artillery Unit. This unit was supported by a field clinic from the 785th Medical Combat Stress Company, with CPT Jeffrey Greenlinger, MSC, Social Worker, as Officer in Charge (OIC). As a result of the intense fighting and atrocities committed in this area, the Commander of the 3-320th Field Artillery requested specific research involving trauma experienced by the local Iraqi population so that he could work more

effectively with them. For this project, the author flew to Mahmudiyah to coordinate a MEDCAP mission and for the requested data collection for research. The mission was coordinated with CPT Greenlinger, SSG Jay Harbeck, and SGT Jeremy White of the 785th.

However, as the MEDCAP mission was about to move out, on 25 March 2008, an ‘Iraqi military assault’ was launched against the port city of Basra, which was held by a number of militia groups, primarily by the Mahdi Army. This led to the collapse of the cease-fire and renewed fighting in Sadr City in Baghdad itself. Beginning early in the morning of March 25th, the Mahdi Army militia launched a number of rocket and mortar attacks from Sadr City at US ‘forward operating bases’ throughout Baghdad,



785th Combat Stress Unit at Mahmudiyah, Iraq, March 2008.

*Vehicular damage, 3-320th
Field Artillery, Mahmudiya,
March 2008.*



as well as the 'Green Zone.'

The 2008 Battle of Sadr City involved approximately six weeks of intensive fighting, not all of it confined to the Baghdad area. The battle ultimately resulted in the coalition's defeat of Jaish al-Mahdi. The battle also spread to other areas such as the "Triangle of Death." In Mahmudiyah, night fighting continued when U.S. units there were attacked with small-arms, machine guns and RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades). Snipers and roadside bombs were also used against coalition convoys. Because of this, the scheduled MEDCAP was terminated prematurely and the author and his Sergeant were evacuated by Blackhawk back to Camp Liberty. About one month later, CPT Greenlinger, SSG Jay Harbeck, and SGT Jeremy White of the 785th were able to complete the MEDCAP mission and collect the final data involving 75 Iraqi civilians, including 31 children.

In addition to demographic and other routine medical information collected through the MEDCAP mission, the Traumatic Event Sequelae Inventory (TESI) was translated into Arabic and administered to 75 Iraqi civilians attending the MEDCAP. The Traumatic Event Sequelae Inventory is a special psychometric instrument, designed to diagnose and quantify a very specific emotional and behavioral symptom spectrum most frequently reported by individuals

who have been exposed to one or more traumatic events. TESI was developed in 1995 as a focal component of a comprehensive, multidimensional psychometric battery for assessment and quantification of emotional injury and psychiatric disability.¹⁶ Originally intended for the commercial market only (personal injury/workers' compensation), the first announcement about TESI appeared in the California CLAIMS Journal, Winter 1996. Since then, TESI has become the most widely used instrument in the USA for assessment of posttraumatic emotional and behavioral sequelae.¹⁶ Scores range from a gradient frequency score of 1 (minimal or no trauma) to 8 (most severe trauma). During the 3-320th Field Artillery research, the results of the Arabic TESI administrations were compared with norms from over 64,000 U.S. PTSD/ trauma cases, and more than 6000 Soldiers diagnosed with both PTSD and concussive injuries. Most of these were Iraq War Veterans. The sequelae of both PTSD and concussive injuries have been well delineated in Moore, Hopewell, and Grossman, (2009).

The results of the MEDCAP research demonstrated that overall, the Iraqi civilians



The author at Mahmudiyah, Iraq, March 2008

in the Mahmudiyah area had the most severe problems with fear, psycho acceleration (hyperactivity or arousal,) anxiety, ruminations, anger, musculoskeletal pain, disrupted ability to function in everyday life (ADLS) and both Criteria A and D of the PTSD diagnosis. They scored the highest on PTSD measures of re-experiencing trauma and increased arousal, with lower scores on avoidance, social impairment, marital disturbances and digestive problems. In addition to expected mood disturbances, cognitive, marital, occupational, general functional, and dissociative symptoms were all reported as severe. A summary of the TESI primary disturbances are detailed below.

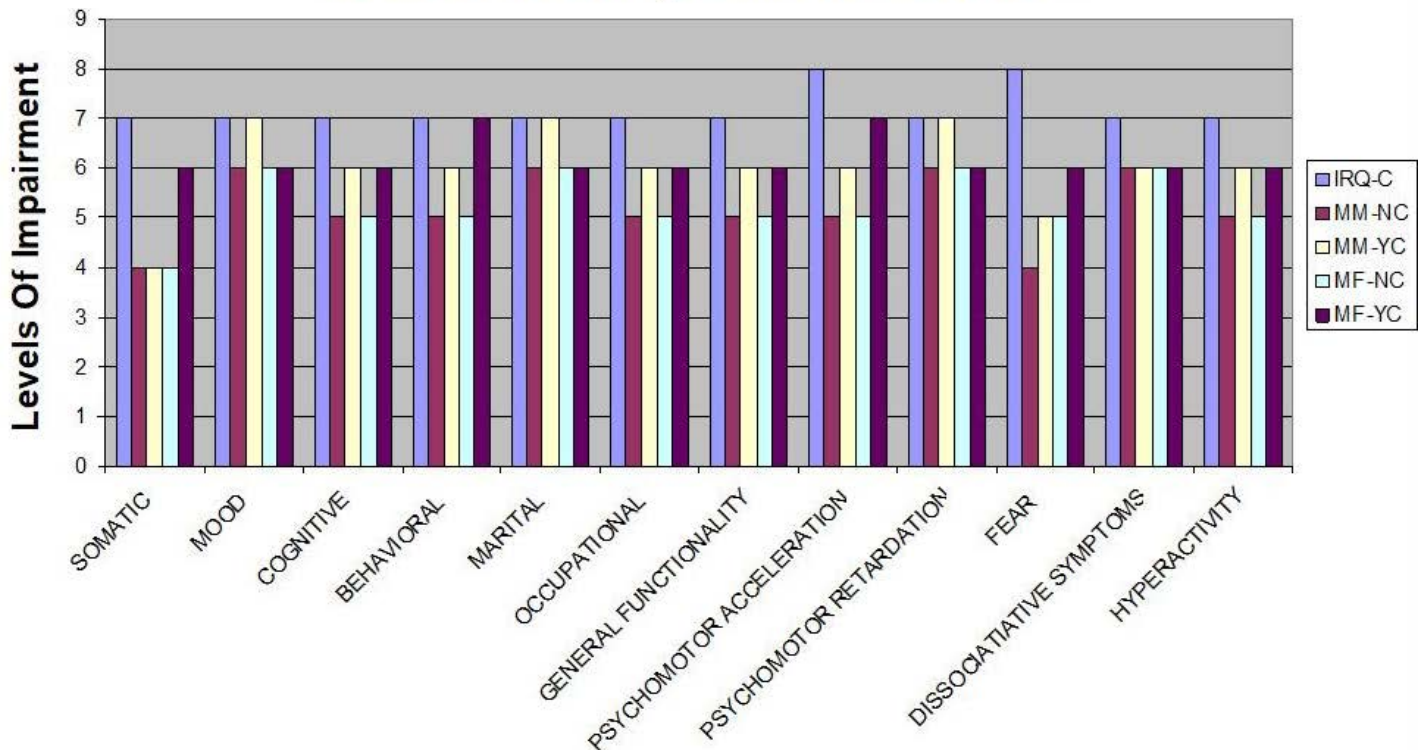
The mean scores of the Iraqi civilians were

between the 7-8 range on the TESI. Religion and family were the main resources for emotional support. As is the case for PTSD in general, symptoms were more prevalent in women than men.¹⁷ When compared to the combat Veterans evaluated at Ft. Hood, scores of these Iraqi civilians were uniformly more severely elevated.¹⁸

The bottom line was that the Iraqis seen in this area of constant strife and terrorist attacks were more traumatized than U.S. combat Veterans with injuries, such as traumatic brain injuries combined with PTSD.

So, what do the memories of Vietnam Veterans brought about 50 years ago and traumatized Iraqis have to do with the current situation in Afghanistan? First of all, lessons

TESI Primary Disturbances



Hopewell, C. A., Greenlinger, J., Harbeck, J, and White, J. (2008). *Psychological Trauma of Local Population in Mahmudiyah Area. Presented to 3-320th FA, FOB Mahmudiyah, Iraq.*

learned from our Vietnam Veterans tell us that memories of sacrifice and betrayal are incredibly destructive at the very base of the soul, and that such memories not only do not go away but may even become increasingly painful over time. Lessons learned also tells us that the underlying mistrust of the government involved in such betrayal may also persist for a lifetime and never subside, with an overriding questioning of “was my sacrifice, and that of my brothers and sisters worth it?” These are more than likely to be the same feelings occurring with our current Veterans; ones that will probably remain with them for the rest of their lives.

And what do the results of a MEDCAP mission done in a little known and remote town in Iraq tell us? Lessons learned also tells us that civilians traumatized in these ways will be scarred for the remainder of their lives, and in some cases, the trauma can be even worse than that involving military personnel who have been neurologically injured and psychologically traumatized by being “blown up.” Such sufferings will probably never resolve completely, and the consequences of PTSD at this level of severity almost always includes large numbers of co-morbid disorders and a shortened life span.¹⁷

What are some other problems that we can foresee from a humanitarian perspective as well as the devastating manmade disaster underway in Afghanistan? COL Platoni and the author were not only U.S. Army Officers, but psychologists charged with motivating Soldiers and “Conserving the Fighting Force.” How do we or any of our fellow military psychologists now encourage young people to join the Armed Forces? How do we motivate troops who may be discouraged, tired, and worn out

by multiple deployments?¹⁹ How do we counsel potential career troops on their military careers? How do we counsel those who have been injured in the line of duty, of the families of the dead or injured? How do we counsel retirees and Veterans, all of whom may feel now that “MY SERVICE WAS NOT WORTH IT, AND MY COUNTRY AND MY MILITARY LEADERS WILL NOT SUPPORT ME?”

These are the questions that only can be answered in the future by a nation and military leaders who are either committed to duty, honor, and country, or who are not.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hopewell Holds four degrees and four foreign language certifications, to include his BS, MS and PhD in Clinical Psychology and a second Master of Science Degree in Clinical Psychopharmacology.

He Received his formal Clinical Neuropsychological training during his residency at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston in the Division of Neurosurgery where he was the very first student of Harvey Levin, PhD, ABPP

Dr. Hopewell was commissioned upon his graduation from the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets. He has served as Chief of Psychology Service at Landstuhl Army Regional Medical Center, where he founded the initial Traumatic Brain Injury Laboratory and at Brooke Army Medical Center, among others. He was the first Army Officer Prescribing Psychologist to serve and to practice in a Combat Theater, where he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service during Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was subsequently awarded a Meritorious Service Medal as he was a primary target during the Ft. Hood Jihadist Terrorist attack by his colleague, Nidal Hasan.

A former President of the Texas Psychological Association, he was also Awarded the Texas Psychological Association Award as the Outstanding Clinical Neuropsychologist in Texas.

He is currently Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine, University of North Texas Health Science Center and maintains his practice in Fort Worth. He has been married for 48 years, has two sons, and is just now expecting his first grandson. His father, LTC Clifford Hopewell, a B-17 navigator prisoner of war, was the stenographer for the infamous Stalag Luft III prison camp in Germany (The Great Escape).

Based upon his combat service and as a prescribing psychologist, he was awarded one of the highest honors of the American Psychological Association, being elected a Fellow of the APA. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine at the University of North Texas Health Science Center.



Leave No Man Behind - R.I.P, July 4, 1776 to August 31, 2021

By Gary M. Jackson, PhD

Mission, duty, honor, pride, patriotism – these sincere and deeply engrained symbolic words are what comes to mind when we think of our dedicated military who knowingly risk their lives, lose their lives, or return home severely injured, dismembered, or suffer severely from long-term maladies such as PTSD. Our troops have been forever faithful to successful missions, our country, fellow members, and to keeping our homeland safe. Leave no man

(person) behind, in particular, has been the golden rule firmly embedded in virtually all military thoughts, commitments, and actions since the beginning of our country. This dedication is the core of the airman's creed, I will never leave an airman behind, the soldier's hardened rule to live and fight by, I will never leave a fallen comrade,¹ and the all-popular Semper Fi call of the Marines (Semper Fidelis – always faithful). It has always been the case, and we unquestionably thought it always would be. With deeply felt sadness and sorrow, we were proven wrong.

Dedicated military have risked their lives to retrieve those knowingly dead, injured, trapped or held hostage behind enemy lines. This has included the rescue of citizens and allies stranded in hostile and dangerous lands. The leave no man behind ethos began with the formation of our country and ended with the shameful U.S. retreat from the 20-year war in Afghanistan at midnight on August 30, 2021. August 31, 2021 was the date President Joe Biden, backed up by his top administration and military leaders, had declared for the complete military troop evacuation from Afghanistan. I might add, at all costs.

President Biden had first declared a September 11, 2021 deadline for complete military evacuation to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attack on the U.S.² On

that infamous September morning two decades ago 19 Taliban supported Al-Qaeda suicide terrorists hijacked U.S. airliners and killed nearly 3,000 innocent Americans in their heartless suicide attacks on our homeland. After declaring the September 11, 2021 date for withdrawal of all troops, President Biden stated the 20-year war was over, and it was safer to withdraw earlier. He then moved the date up to August 31, 2021. Once this new clearly arbitrary date was declared, the Taliban held him to it and insisted on the 31st, as they rapidly closed in on the last needed conquest – Kabul, Afghanistan.

President Biden was dedicated to the August 31st day as the number one priority and ignored known tactical methods of withdrawing troops, equipment, armaments, and supplies from a war-torn country. The date would be met at all costs. Near midnight on August 30th, all U.S. troops had been evacuated and with full intent hundreds of U.S. citizens and many thousands of U.S. troop-faithful Afghans were left behind along with \$85 billion of war equipment and armaments. To use an old term, the U.S. had cut and ran.

Our country has lost credibility worldwide, and our allies are shocked and enraged at the manner of the Biden-commanded August 31st U.S. troop withdrawal – which turned out to be more of an unconditional retreat, if not surrender. Forget the political spin, this was a disaster by any reasonable perspective. The hasty



Kabul, Afghanistan, August, 14, 2021, Kabul airport with the rush of commercial and military aircraft to depart the country before the Taliban advance

irresponsible retreat was just evidence for the continuing presence of poor judgment that had allowed a terrorist attack on August 26, 2021. On this day, an ISIS-K suicide bomber passed multiple U.S. approved Taliban checkpoints to detonate in the midst of a chaotic crowd attempting to flee the recent Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. Those wanting to flee were panic-stricken and clamored around the Abbey Gate

entrance of Hamid Karzai International Airport in Afghanistan by the thousands. All were basically begging to gain entry to the flights helping to evacuate U.S. citizens, Afghans who had risked their lives for decades to assist U.S. forces, and Afghan citizens not wanting to face the horrific restrictions of Islamic Sharia law most assuredly awaiting them - especially for women and young girls.

In the midst of the chaos, U.S. troops were trying to manage the unrelenting press of the crowds at the gate amidst clearly announced warnings of imminent terrorist attacks to be directed at the airport. To the horror of all who watched the retreat of U.S. troops in real time, the Taliban, dedicated supporters of Al-Qaeda, were trusted by the President Biden directed fiasco to manage perimeter security outside the gates. To the surprise of very few, if any, the Taliban guarding the airport perimeter for the U.S. managed to let the explosive laden suicide vehicle pass through all multiple Taliban checkpoints. Without any attempt to stop the vehicle, the suicide bomber driven truck reached the targeted

clamoring crowd, and the driver detonated the explosives. It was a horrific explosion which violently tore apart the bodies and lives of 13 U.S. military personnel and 182 civilians.

Although horrific in many ways, it was clear to many this attack was avoidable and forever more will symbolize the embarrassing and rushed retreat from Afghanistan completed five days later. There are many unanswered questions which, if single spaced, would exceed the length of this article. To state a few at the top of the list: How could we possibly have trusted longtime al-Qaeda supporters, the Taliban, to provide perimeter security at the Hamid Karzai International Airport as U.S.

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troops valiantly labored 24/7 to evacuate men, women, and children to meet the unrealistic August 31st deadline just five days away? What were our military leaders thinking? We had fought the Taliban in Afghanistan for 20 years and now they were being trusted to provide perimeter security by controlling checkpoints! Why weren't announced warnings of terrorist attacks to be directed to that very target not taken more seriously? Most importantly and most unforgiveable, why were 13 military members assigned to crowd control outside the gate amidst numerous and frequent threats of attack and with the America-hating Taliban providing perimeter security? Credulity has been stretched to a maximum.

The less than adequate U.S. management of troop evacuation during the rush to meet the arbitrary August 31st deadline simply underscored the obvious lack of adherence to the centuries old leave no man behind commitment. American citizens and Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders who risked their lives for many years to assist the U.S. military were told by the U.S. they would be evacuated if they made it to the airport through the aforementioned Taliban controlled checkpoints. Seriously? Those in control actually trusted the Taliban to provide approved passage to American citizens and those 20,000 to 30,000 Afghan U.S. sympathizers who worked against them by providing assistance to the hated U.S. military over the many years war? Why didn't the military retrieve them? If more troops were needed, then they should have been provided. If it took longer than August 31st, then the deadline should have been extended. It was impossible to make it through checkpoints - alive. This is

elementary, and any Service Member in boot camp knows better.

It was not the desire to withdraw troops from Afghanistan after a 20-year war that is in question. It was the hasty and reckless "do not care" manner in which we dropped everything and left at all costs. It was the manner in which we rapidly began the evacuation of all troops and embassy personnel with no notification to allies who also had skin in the game in this long-standing war. The withdrawal of all troops, beginning with the unannounced evacuation of the Bagram Airbase, was chaotic and a disaster by any reasonable assessment, including President Biden abdicating responsibility for leaving no man behind. To use an old term, we cut and ran.

Strong statements, indeed. So, let's examine the more significant events leading up to and included in this tragic surrender:

- April 14, 2021 - President Joe Biden publicly announced that, after two decades, the U.S. would withdraw all troops from Afghanistan. Stating that his predecessor had made a commitment to Afghanistan to leave, President Biden stated, "But the United States will withdraw its troops in a safe, deliberate and responsible manner and in full coordination with its partners and allies in Afghanistan." ²
- July 1, 2021 - Under the cover of darkness, the U.S. military abandoned the highly fortified Bagram Airbase without notifying the Afghanistan base commander or any U.S. allies. The base commander learned of the abandonment two hours after the rapid and complete exit. The abandonment of the fortified Bagram Airbase left the far less secure Hamid Karzai International Airport as the

single egress point for the evacuation of troops, U.S. citizens, and trusted Afghan workers from Afghanistan.

- Then President Biden stated reason for the rapid withdrawal of forces was that Afghanistan forces would take over, but they folded in an unanticipated and unplanned manner in just two days as the Taliban took control of the country. On August 15th in the midst of the rapid collapse of the Afghan military, President Ashraf Ghani fled Afghanistan by air to Uzbekistan before going to the United Arab Emirates where he gained political asylum.³
- On August 18, 2021 in a widely broadcast President Biden ABC News interview, President Biden was asked, "Are you committed to making sure that the troops stay until every American who wants to be out is out?" President Biden answered, "If there are American citizens left, we're going to stay until we get them all out."⁴
- Twelve days later, on August 30, 2021 at 11:59 pm, the U.S. military flew the last plane from the Kabul Hamid Karzai International Airport, leaving no troops as the Taliban completed its takeover. Although President Joe Biden had completed his commitment to leave by August 31, 2021, the retreat occurred at unconscionable costs.
- August 31, 2021 marked the total evacuation of the U.S. military and diplomatic presence



- from Kabul. A shameful exhibition of ignoring the revered policy of leave no man behind, it was a retreat heard around the world. An untold number of U.S. citizens and many thousands of Afghan loyalists were left to hide and escape the best way they could amidst a promise that diplomatic means would be used to help them exit - whatever that meant. There was no diplomatic presence left! Clearly, those stranded were left with no plan.
- By the end of the retreat, or surrender, from Afghanistan, the U.S. troop led effort had airlifted 122,000 from Afghanistan to foreign countries. Yet less than 5% were Americans.
 - On August 31, 2021, amidst much criticism, a defiant President Biden, in his speech to the nation, branded the rapid, no condition retreat as an "extraordinary success." This demands repeating. Just 24 hours after troops were withdrawn and in the aftermath of losing 13 troops and 185 civilians in an unfortunate and likely preventable suicide terrorist attack, and knowingly leaving many hundreds of American citizens, many thousands of SIV holders, and an estimated 85 billion dollars in equipment and armaments behind to the Taliban, President

Biden labeled the unconditional retreat as an “extraordinary success.” Political Spin is too polite of a term – this is outright lying. If this was a success by any definition, I shudder even more to think of what a failure would have been. Could any one person trying to fail to leave no man behind have done worse? I think not.

The Aftermath

There was a worldwide outcry, particularly among our allies, about the surprising and disastrous evacuation of U.S. military troops and diplomatic personnel from Afghanistan. Yes, troops were gone, and no embassy or related staff remained. While indicating that the U.S. would use diplomatic means and leverage against the Taliban to release those left behind, little evidence has been available to indicate what diplomatic means would be used other than negotiating with the American hating Taliban. It is ludicrous that an arbitrary date of withdrawal would be enforced at all costs resulting in leaving men behind and at the mercy of our negotiations with the Taliban.

Many questioned what possible leverage the U.S. could have with the Taliban who now controlled the country and maintained control of those left behind. Did leverage equate to ransom being paid by the U.S. under any other name? Would we promise increased standing as a new country on a worldwide basis to a country harboring dozens to hundreds of terrorist organizations? The questions are endless.

On September 6, 2021 a U.S. citizen mother and her three children were the first known to escape Afghanistan since the August 31, 2021 U.S. troop evacuation. A private group with

private funding comprised of retired Veterans were able to extract the four after weeks of tireless work. The U.S. State Department released a statement that it had facilitated the release. This was discounted as not truthful by the private rescue team, as well as the mother. They stated the U.S. State Department had little to nothing to do with the rescue.⁸ Although six days after the troop evacuation, President Biden had not addressed the Afghanistan debacle other than stating in his August 31st national address that all was an extraordinary success.

U.S. citizens and Afghan SIV holders left behind is the most egregious result of the reckless attempt at troop withdrawal in a war that lasted 20 years. But, if leaving many behind was not enough, much more than men were left behind. The aftermath of the withdrawal resulted in the leaving behind of a shocking amount of clearly operational U.S. war equipment and armaments left to the notorious Taliban. There was no attempt to disable or remove an amazing amount of wartime capability. Although the retreat included disabling equipment left at the Hamid Karzai International Airport, this was a pittance compared to what capability was left for the Taliban. Many images and videos surfaced of the Taliban wearing U.S. military clothing and sitting in aircraft as well as driving through the streets in U.S. vehicles.

At the time of the complete withdrawal, the Afghanistan military fled and even the President of Afghanistan was gone. Who was the U.S. abandoned \$85 billion of war equipment to go to other than the Taliban? There was only the Taliban, who has quickly become the best equipped in the world whether they are labeled as insurgents or terrorists, thanks to the U.S.

retreat. To fully grasp what was left behind and why the result is of grave concern for worldwide safety, the following list is provided for context:

- **Vehicles:** 42,604 light tactical vehicles, 22,174 Humvees, 8,998 medium tactical vehicles (MTV), 1,005 recovery vehicles, 928 mine resistant ambush protected (MRAP) vehicles, and 189 armored personnel carriers, for a total of 75,898 vehicles in working order.⁵
- **Military Equipment:** 600,000 infantry weapons including M16 assault rifles, 162,000 units of communication equipment, and 16,000 sets of night vision goggles; and from an armaments count: 61,000 M203 rounds, 20,040 grenades, Howitzers, mortars +1,000's of rounds, 10,000 2.75 inch air to ground rockets, reconnaissance equipment (ISR), laser aiming units, explosives ordnance C-4, semtex, detonators, shaped charges, thermite, incendiaries, AP/API/APIT, 2,520 bombs. Also, administration encrypted cell phones and laptops - all operational, pallets of millions of dollars in US currency, millions of rounds of ammunition including but not limited to 20,150,600 rounds of 7.62mm, 9,000,000 rounds of 50 caliber, large stockpile of plate carriers and body armor, and US Military HIIDE, for Handheld Interagency Identity Detection Equipment Biometrics.⁶
- **Aircraft:** 43 MD-530 helicopters, 33 UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters, 32 Mi-17 helicopters, 33 C-208/AC-208 planes, 29 A-29 light attack planes, 3 C-130 Hercules military transport planes, for a total of 173 high performing military aircraft all in working order.⁷

What else could be wrong? First and foremost, there are numerous reports from a variety of respectable sources

that U.S. citizens and SIV and green card holders are being held hostage. Reports started on September 5, 2021 that six planes holding such passengers were sitting on the tarmac at the Mazar-i-Sharif International Airport in northern Afghanistan and had been there for some days. These planes were kept from leaving by the Taliban. On September 9, 2021, apparently one plane was allowed to leave by the Taliban. It is clear that as this article is completed and submitted the fear of the Taliban using those left behind as hostages to gain leverage and ransom of any sort is happening.

Yes, our beloved creed of leave no man behind died on August 31, 2021 when all U.S. troops under our Commander in Chief's directed retreat from Afghanistan was complete to his satisfaction. The retreat occurred with full intent to leave a yet unknown number of U.S. citizens and Afghan helpers behind in addition to \$85 billion in military equipment to the Taliban. We are left to assume that leave no man behind has become leave at all costs to meet an imposed arbitrary deadline and leave some men behind. The politically charged August 31, 2021 deadline as a 9/11 anniversary ploy took precedence over our typical dedication to a mission where all equipment is retrieved or disabled, and no man is left behind. Even in the unlikely event that all are retrieved by diplomatic means after the fact, the retreat from Afghanistan will forever be known as leaving men behind by intent.

My former and now late office director at the Central Intelligence Agency, Frank Anderson, preached to us the slogan, Mission, Men, and Me. This was stated as the priority to always be followed. The U.S. troop withdrawal completed on August 31, 2021 was the first example ever

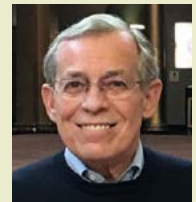
of Me, Mission, and Men last. In fact, mission and men were an afterthought. Yes, R.I.P. leave no man behind, but resilient America will resurrect reason and dedication to this very powerful promise to our fellow man. You can count on it.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Gary M. Jackson is the CEO and President of ANBECO, LLC. Trained as a behavioral psychologist with specialties in artificial intelligence and automated assessment, Dr. Jackson has designed and developed scores of advanced applications across both corporate and U.S. Government settings. Dr. Jackson's career has spanned academia as a professor, director of R&D and treatment development in various clinical settings, psychologist within the U.S. Secret Service Intelligence Division, Intelligence Officer and Chief of three advanced technology branches within the Central Intelligence Agency, vice president and director of research and development for a major psychological test development company, Director of the Center for the Advancement of Intelligent Systems (CAIS) for the American Institutes for Research and, the founding president and CEO of Psynapse Technologies in Washington DC. Dr. Jackson has extensive R&D and operational field experience in counterterrorism, counterintelligence, counternarcotics, and asymmetric warfare prediction, tracking, and locating. He holds BA and PhD degrees from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale and an MA degree from University of Illinois-Springfield. He has completed additional postdoctoral training in neurophysiology at the University of South Florida Medical School. Dr. Jackson has obtained multiple patents and is the inventor of the patented automated behavior assessment Checkmate network intrusion protection system, Inmate network misuse detection system for insider threat, Automated Behavior Analysis (AuBA) technology and tools and insider threat applications. His latest books include: *Predicting Malicious Behavior: Tools and Techniques for Ensuring Global Security* (Wiley & Sons, 2012), and *Surviving Mass Victim Attacks: What to do When the Unthinkable Happens* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018). jacksongm@anbeco.org, 443-510-8904



"Thirteen Tomorrows"

By Merissa Lee Kelley

Thirteen Tomorrows never came
And our world will never be the same
For the best of the best...went forth to meet
A tyrannical foe and they did not retreat
In pursuit of freedom, they answered the call
And our Thirteen Tomorrows gave their all
Let us honor their memories in dignified ways
So, Thirteen Tomorrows can live on each day...

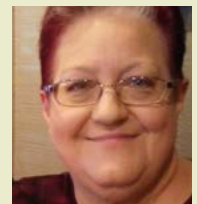
Merissa Lee Kelley
August 30, 2021

In honor and memory

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Merissa Kelley was born in Omaha, Nebraska, where her dad was stationed at Offutt Air Force Base. Being raised in a military family as an "Air Force Brat," she was fortunate to be able to travel to many countries and to experience their cultures. She made wonderful friends and created many treasured memories over the years. She is still in touch with several families that they were stationed with over the course of her father's USAF career. Her dad retired from the Air Force in 1974 at Langley AFB. Her family still resides in Virginia, where she has worked for Ferguson Enterprises for the last 10 years. She has two grown children and four grandchildren.

"There is a bond like no other growing up military. It still stands strong and is the most important reason for the deep respect and love I have for Veterans and their welfare. I write poetry to express my thoughts and this poem is my way of honoring them. Poetry is like painting pictures with words... and I wanted my words to resonate how awesome our military and Veterans are across the board."



Rest In Peace

Gone but never forgotten



LCpl David Espinoza



Sgt Nicole Gee



SSgt Taylor Hoover



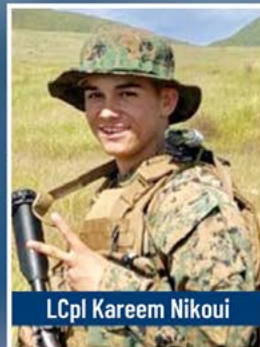
Cpl Hunter Lopez



LCpl Rylee McCollum



LCpl Dylan Merola



LCpl Kareem Nikoui



Cpl Daegan Page



Sgt Johanny Rosario



Cpl Humberto Sanchez



LCpl Jared Schmitz



SSG Ryan Knauss



Corpsman Max Soviak

The Fall of Afghanistan Feels Personal

By Tom McMurtry, DAIS, Police Officer (Ret), CPT, US Army, Special Forces (Ret)

It felt like a friend died

I knew that we as a nation couldn't stay and support the Army and government of Afghanistan forever. In fact, I thought we would draw down and go home ten years ago after Osama bin Laden had been found. I also knew that the American backed government would have to work out some sort of an arrangement with the Taliban. I naively thought that balance could be found between the two opposing groups of approximately equal strength. I was wrong. I watched with the rest of the world as the Army and government that we had worked so hard and so long to build and support tried to stand up on their own only to collapse in ten days. I was heartbroken. It felt like an Army buddy died.

Stages of Grief

Much has been written concerning the grief that naturally follows the death of someone close to us. There are various models that suggest a sequence of stages that attempt to describe the process of grieving. Some people have found this structure useful, others not. There are as many ways to grieve as there are people who are hurting. In an attempt to be helpful, I will describe some of my own feelings and some emotions I have heard from other Veterans. I will use the Kübler-Ross seven stages of grief model. The first four stages are:

1. **Shock and Denial** - I felt numb as I watched the Afghan government fold under pressure. I didn't disbelieve it. I was watching it on the news almost in real time. But I was truly in shock that it all happened so fast.
2. **Pain and Guilt** - In my case these are companion feelings. I said in the opening paragraph that I felt like a buddy died. Actually, it was worse than that, it felt like we had left a buddy behind who then died.
3. **Anger and Bargaining** - "What happened? You

collapsed in ten days. Wasn't twenty years long enough time? Should we have stayed forever? Wasn't a trillion dollars enough money? What more did you need? Don't you care enough about your own people to defend them?"

4. **Depression** - "Well, as bad as things are in Afghanistan right now it will probably get worse, much worse."

My experience was that the emotions described in the first four stages piled one on top of the other. Sometimes they seemed to come all at once. I would walk away and get on with life. Only to later watch the news and have the same emotions recur in waves. I don't have much to say about the last three stages of this model. Which are:

5. The upward turn.
6. Reconstruction and working through.
7. Acceptance and hope.

It is too soon for me to even think about these. They are aspirational and I'm sure each is possible over time. Right now, I and perhaps other Veterans find themselves stuck somewhere between pain and acceptance, between anger and hope.

Same damage, different pain

Years ago, I attended an evening of live amateur boxing. The last bout was between heavy weights. These men were well trained, evenly matched, and well-motivated. For three





three-minute rounds they went at each other. Each pugilist giving and receiving hard bows to the head and body. The match ended in a split decision, but one won and the other lost. The fighters hugged and returned to their corners. There was no hurry to get out of the ring as it had been the last fight. I was also in no hurry to leave and watched as the trainers cared for their fighters. It appeared that each had sustained about the same amount of physical damage, but the loser seemed to be in a lot of pain as he was being consoled in his loss. The winner appeared to feel no pain as he was congratulated in his victory.

My grandfather and all his brothers served in the Second World War. They didn't talk about it much but from time to time would sit together at family reunions and tell stories. As a young boy I loved to listen. They were real war heroes as well as being my heroes. I joined the Army in March of 1975. Saigon fell in April. I watched as the people the Americans had worked with and made promises to tried to escape an uncertain future. The scene I remember most has empty helicopters being pushed off aircraft carriers into the sea to make room for more trying to land. I was a brand-new soldier and every

drill sergeant, every military instructor, every unit leader I had was a Vietnam War Veteran. They seemed to have a war story to emphasize every point they tried to make to us new guys. Sometimes at the end of a day's training, in the field or in a bar, they would talk about Vietnam. It seemed different from the way WWII Vets talked about their war. There were the universal experiences of being away from home, facing an enemy, losing people, and being different once you got home. But the Veterans who had lost a war had a subtle melancholy, an unstated sadness, a bitter taste left in their mouths that no amount of beer could wash away.

Let's do it right this time

The Vietnam War was widely unpopular among the American people and this was often projected onto those who

served during that period. So many Veterans had issues reintegrating into civilian life that the stereotype of a tormented homeless Vietnam Vet became a media trope. Sylvester Stallone portraying John Rambo in *First Blood* is a classic example. Now America has just come in second place in another war. We as a nation need to do better for our Afghan friends. We as current and former Service Members need to do better for our "battle buddies." We, all of us, need to reach out to those who may be hurting. Tell them it's a buddy check. See how they are feeling. Don't take 'fine' for an answer. Then do it again a month from now, two months from now. If you receive such a call share your feelings. This may require us to stretch and be vulnerable, but that's okay we're more than strong enough. We are all in this together. Let's do it right this time.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom McMurtry has spent most of his adult life serving others. He joined the U.S. Army at the age of nineteen, volunteered for and completed Infantry, Airborne, and Special Forces training. After three years serving on a Special Forces HALO Team Tom became a Reservist. He remained in the Special Operations Reserve for twenty more years. He was recalled to active duty for the invasion of Iraq as a Psychological Operations Specialist, during which he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal. After his combat tour Tom returned home and entered the police academy at age 49. He served as a patrol officer for 15 years and received the Distinguished Action Award for his response on the night of the Dayton mass shooting in the Oregon District. Tom retired at the age of 65 but was recalled to part time duty by his department at the height of the pandemic to help cover for fellow officers who were sick. All of that aside, Tom will tell you that he takes greatest pride in his 45-year marriage to his wife, Holly, along with their five children and ten grandchildren.



Commentary: The Nation's Longest War

By COL (Ret) DJ Reyes, US Army

The Nation's longest War comes to an end and what unfolded before the world has been, at times, confusing, bewildering, and saddening. Through it all we lost 13 of our own - 11 Marines, 1 Navy Corpsman, and 1 Army soldier. These souls will never have the opportunity to grow old with their families and loved ones. We mourn their losses, as we continue to grapple with American citizens and Afghan SIV holders remaining in a country whose security environment continues

to be de-stabilized due to the local and regional factions (Taliban and ISIS-K), as well as other malign nation state influences (China and Russia).

As the former Director, ISAF CJ2 Intelligence Campaign Plans (2011-2012), I helped inform our military decisionmakers on the security environment and the complex variables in this restive part of the World. Armed with the data and constantly evolving analysis, military planners then developed the multiple contingency plans for US / Coalition forces, which included 'boots on the ground' options aligned with phased withdrawals. So, like others, I didn't question the decision to eventually withdraw, but rather the manner in which we executed the operation. For the uninformed, the ongoing operations portrayed "bad optics" in the media.

At the ground level and in my operating space, we have fellow OEF (Afghanistan), OIF (Iraq) and even Vietnam War Veterans who I have been speaking with and who have expressed concerns over our national situation. More somberly, I have been contacted by Gold Star moms and dads who are greatly disturbed over what has transpired. Like a recurring movie that ends badly, many of our citizens are subjected to reliving traumatic experiences due to the endless media and news coverage. The common themes / questions I have received are: a) Why is this happening the way that it is? b) Did my husband

/ wife / son / daughter / brother / sister die in vain? c) Why are we not living up to our military ethos of "leave no Servicemember behind" when it comes to remaining American Citizens and those Afghans who assisted our military forces and risked their lives and that of their families for the last 2 decades?"

More importantly, I sense a level of tremendous psychological distress upon everyone with whom I have had these painful conversations. This is like an emotional pressure cooker. Hordes of us who have worn the uniform and are "in the know" about the truths unfolding before us are looking for the escape hatch to release these terrible burdens.

It is my personal opinion that politics are indeed a messy business, especially in areas of conflict which require the deployment of our Nation's most treasured resource - our men and women - and where we almost inevitably experience the tragic loss of lives. I also believe that, as citizens, it is our responsibility to ensure that we exercise our right to vote for those who can best develop and implement our national policies. At the very least, voting places the responsibility squarely where it belongs - upon our elected officials.

This leads me to my final points. Over the years, but especially during the most recent times, I have shared these personal thoughts with many.





- a. Irrespective of the “politics” or even what our own political leanings are, as a military, we must understand our role. Bottom line - we accomplished our mission. We did our share of the tasks at hand and we did it well. We did it with honor, with integrity, and with fidelity. Never forget that.
- b. Our community must balance the ‘right’ to exercise its judgmental opinions against the harmful effects upon those Veterans and their families who have borne the brunt and who continue to deal with tragedy. One example: as the Senior Mentor Program Coordinator for Tampa, Florida’s Veterans Treatment Court (VTC), I note that our primary mission is to help the Veteran defendants (many of whom are combat Veterans) to successfully complete the court-mandated requirements for treatment and rehabilitation. A critical mentor task is to just listen and to “be there for the Veteran,” as he or she deals with the daily struggles associated with conditions such as PTSD, TBI, MST, and/or alcohol/ substance abuse.
- c. If interested in learning more about your local military / Veterans, get involved where they are engaged. Local military units have Public Affairs Officers (PAO) where you can learn more about any public activities or events. Local Chambers of Commerce have a Military Affairs Committee (MAC) comprised of business representatives who interface with the local military units. Most local universities and colleges have a Student Veteran Association (SVA) Chapter, many of whom are utilizing their Post 9-11 GI Bill educational benefits and who are still serving in the National Guard or the Reserves. The bottom line is this: do more than just saying “Thank you for your service” next time you see a Veteran or his / her family.
- d. Finally, for those Veterans that you know who are continuing to struggle, please tell them to reach out for help. In Tampa, we have a strategic partnership with the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay and the Veteran operator run “211” Center. Nationally, the Veterans Crisis Line (800-273-8255) is another quick resource for those in need. As a military culture, we are trained to “suck it up,” “make it happen,” and “mission first.” I believe we have to recalibrate our thinking when it comes to diagnosed psychological disorders or disabilities and inform those of the available treatments available to promote wellness, rehabilitation, and overall resiliency. We owe at least this much to our military, our Veterans and their families.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DJ Reyes is a retired U.S. Army Colonel with over 33 years of faithful service to our great Nation. Earning his bachelors, masters, and juris doctor degrees from the University of Notre Dame, the U.S. Naval War College, and Temple University School of Law, DJ also commanded or served in primary staff positions in special forces / operations, military intelligence, infantry, airborne, air assault, Joint/ Interagency, and Multi-National organizations. His combat and contingency deployments included tours in Iraq, Afghanistan, North Africa, Bosnia, Kosovo and Haiti. In addition to providing independent consulting for organizations supporting Veterans, military families with special needs, and victims of human trafficking, DJ previously served as a Department of Defense contractor assisting local Florida Veterans and their spouses with employment opportunities. DJ currently sits on the following advisory boards: National Veterans Court Alliance, Washington DC; U.S. Congresswoman Kathy Castor (D-FL 12th) U.S. Service Academy Nomination Committee; U.S. Congressman Gus Bilirakis (R-FL 14th) Veterans Advisory Committee; Florida Department of the VA Executive Director Danny Burgess' "Forward March" Veteran Program Legal Sub-Committee; and Legislative Chair, Florida Veterans Council, Orlando. Finally, DJ devotes significant time and energy in his community service role as senior military advisor and mentor to the 13th Judicial Circuit's Veterans Treatment Court, or VTC. The VTC identifies those Veterans in trouble with the law resulting from some disorder or disability incurred during military service, obtains the necessary medical treatment and therapies for them, assists in the rehabilitation process, and promotes their successful reintegration back into the Veterans' local communities. Within Tampa Bay, DJ was recognized in 2014 with the Tampa Bay Business Journal's "Heroes at Work" Award for his continuing public service as a Veteran-owned business consultant supporting both military and special needs communities. In 2016, DJ was awarded with the Hillsborough County Bar Association's highest award - the Liberty Bell Award - for his exemplary efforts in promoting, and advocating for, the legal judicial system and process as it supports the local Veterans and special needs communities. The Hillsborough County's Sheriff's Hispanic Advisory Council also announced DJ as the 2016 recipient of the Raymond E. Fernandez Award. This award is presented each year to an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the criminal justice system. In January 2020, (NHL) Tampa Bay Lightning Owner Jeff Vinik's Foundation announced DJ as this year's recipient of the Tampa Bay Lightning Community Hero Award. Finally, the Notre Dame Club of Greater Tampa Bay recently announced DJ's nomination for the 2020 Father Corby Award for Distinguished Military Service.



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