

SOLDIER

Recently, I had the privilege and enjoyment of reading an excellent book by Karen DeYoung called **Soldier...The Life of Colin Powell**. The song goes like this: "there is something about a soldier that is fine, fine, fine!" Colin Powell was a fine soldier and crowned a lifetime of duty, honor and commitment as Secretary of State. In respect he prefers the accolade as distinguished soldier rather than Mr. Secretary one would guess.

General Powell mirrors all the success of Gulf War One tempered by the failures of Gulf War Two. The irony seems incomprehensible when assumption was prevalent he could have been President yet felt the challenge to be the arbiter of our Foreign Policy in association with George W. Bush. His selection was seen as a perfect mix as possibly the most popular and honored man in America with the son of the President, Powell respected and served with honor. He would be the 'strong right hand' of an untried man who barely succeeded to the Presidency. It was not to be, and perhaps reveals the ideological clash within the Bush 43 administration...and the terrible mess that is post-war(Gulf II)administration and occupation. Powell slipped into history and the never ending war continues.

As an old soldier, I can empathize with Powell and recognize his frustrations: we all believed that the Johnson Administration(with Kennedy leftovers) micro-managed the Vietnam War and allowed fear of WWII(with China or the Soviet Union)to effect the war strategy ending with failure as well as ignominy for the South Vietnamese in the collapse. As I retired, Major Powell sought the necessity to restore the reputation of the military.

Retrospectively, one would think the team of George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Don Rumsfeld and Powell would be a collaboration made in heaven. It was Rumsfeld who as Secretary of Defense for then President Ford recommended Cheney as Chief of Staff and we recall the Cheney-Powell team in Gulf One. The so-called Powell doctrine as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was known: overwhelming force -a specific strategic and tactical objective to 'sever the head of the opposing force', surround and annihilate the remnants, and if necessary 'clear and hold' enemy enclaves with an even larger force. Though military critics and historians believed we should have struck the crumbling Iraqi military and political structure to include killing or capturing Saddam Hussein in Gulf One, Bush 41 reminded UN approval included only the retaking of Kuwait and environs. To the contrary, Arab support would have rejected the continuance to Baghdad....And yet?

History may wonder at what was a portent. ...post-war scenario(regime change, capture and trial of Hussein, overwhelming force to clear, hold and mold a new Iraq, retention of Iraqi military to aid in security, and an on-going counter-insurgency before an insurgency could materialize. Application of a 'unconditional surrender' facade that promoted a 'with us or agin us' rationale). Hearts and minds can be changed with overwhelming force to remind those who had mixed emotions. I remember the docile Japan and Germany with no insurgency

In this scenario there is no Gulf War II, and suppose an Iraq of consequence and hope. I see the fabled victory march of General Schwarzkopf and his army accept the plaudits of a grateful nation... and Soldier-Diplomat Colin Powell as President...to keep us together as one. But that was then, and this is now. A City on the Hill....in shadow!