

THE PARADOX OF WAR

As we near the moment of truth or perhaps of decision-the beginning of troop deployment from Afghanistan, continuing changeover of force level and tactical control in Iraq-a cursory analysis of these wars seems prescient.

Initiated by 9/11, the US quickly per plan inserted Special Operation teams with tactical air along with assistance to the Northern Alliance Tajiks, to isolate the Taliban, chasing them into the mountains and borders. This was the Afghanistan phase, while offering exile to Saddam Hussein or suffer consequences in Iraq. In March of 2003, a major invasion, essentially American and British forces left Kuwait and captured Baghdad in a relatively short time culminating in the Iraq phase. Post-operations suffered primarily via rising insurgencies in both locales. If we left tomorrow, victory would be moot. And most importantly, what of Islam, both of the moderate and radical ideology and religion?

Faced with the dilemma of nineteen Muslim fanatics on 9/11, it proved a problem for the Bush Administration to define the enemy as Islam, thus the creation of the misnomer: War against Terror. "We will attack the terrorists and those who harbor them". Thus we applied the former, and did nothing about the latter. It is still a problem today perhaps, ironic and perceptive in the congressional committee hearings seeking, if any Islamic radicalization in the United States. As we know President Obama turned a blind eye to any Islamic involvement (Ft Hood murderer, and botched attempts by Muslim bombers in Detroit, and Times Square)-and to terrorism, per se.

To gain a rationale, experience and wisdom in these undeclared wars/operations and related information I have turned to two books: 'Without Hesitation' (former Chairman, Jt Chiefs of Staff, General Hugh Shelton)and 'Known and Unknown'(Don Rumsfeld, Former Secretary of Defense). Both recently written.

Shelton, revered by those of us in the infantry –I

met him at the Florida Ranger Camp 50 year reunion in May of 2001 where he was the principal speaker-as a tough, no-nonsense guy of Airborne, Special Forces and Ranger experiences in peace and war. While Chairman he required all of his 4-star Generals to read a book by Major McMaster: 'Dereliction of Duty' which informed that all the Joint Chiefs during the Vietnam War had reservations but never spoke up. Arranged was the turnover of his job to the Vice Chairman Myers with the proviso to watch out for Rumsfeld, whose persona reminded of Secretary McNamara, on day after 9/11. Shelton believed it was not necessary to attack Iraq as it appeared contained and a shadow of its former self. Rumsfeld disagreed with Shelton on this, and believed no fly zones had little effect, and missile shoots at an elusive bin-Laden seemed fruitless. Too, Shelton said Army Chief of Staff Eric Shinseki warned of too few troops planned for the Iraq attack and was cashiered.

Rumsfeld rebuts the Shelton claim that Shinseki was let go because of his disagreement with troop levels for Iraq, as Shinseki, allegedly said the opposite earlier. He was not impressed with the plans for 9/11 response by Shelton, though the General did agree to the SF ops employed against the Taliban. And claimed that troop levels prior to, during and later were a constant request by Rumsfeld to his Iraq commanders. And there was much discussion over the paradox of pure Islam and other Islamic definitions: "With the many billions of Muslims who live by Shari'a and Islam, it was a hard choice, not to point out the different faces of Islam". Rumsfeld said we were wrong, 'not to communicate that we were fighting an extremist ideology rooted in Islam'. Regrets for not finding WMD(Weapons of mass Destruction)were aired, though reminding that they were used against the Kurds and also Iran in that war.

Without compromise, and perhaps aid from the moderate Muslims, pure Islam will continue to fester. Thus, we are trapped in a paradox of war: a thing that combines contradictory features or qualities. An undeclared war that appears relatively successful, but in fact

appears to favor those, especially the true Islamist who sees the Jihad, or Holy War relatively victorious. I believe this.

Irony tells us we should have continued on and totally conquered Iraq, overthrow Saddam, provide a blanket of security, assume all were fair game until proven otherwise, an 'unconditional surrender mode' as we used in WWII. Germany and Japan were totally defeated and spawned no post-war insurrection. We had sufficient troops, had in 100 hours, smashed the best and worst of Iraq's forces, accepting massive surrender and a fait accompli –Gulf One par excellence! But we didn't.

Gulf Two appeared to approximate the former in its 'shock and awe', a quick strike with combined air and ground attack, a victory seemingly complete with the toppling of the Saddam statue in Baghdad. Soon the terribly incomplete post-war scenario, surfaced: too few troops to secure the country, premature selection of a civil control(Iraq Interim Authority)and the die was cast. Insurrection rose and was exploited by al-Qaeda as Afghanistan lost its attention and luster.

We are at an impasse compounded by a weak President who seems tranquillized by a lack of decisive leadership whether it's the moribund economy and financial dilemma, oil strategy while the mideast rumbles, oil nations threatened, and an inability to recognise the Islamic threat, abroad, and here. He is there with words, not action in an uncertain arena that cries out for realistic strategic thinking and leadership.

Winning in these wars reminds of the paradox, so let us leave both theaters at the specified time, yet be vigilant and keep our powder dry!