

War Is Hell

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Steve McCullough

Here's the problem with war today, as I see it. Many in America (and most of the civilized world) no longer understand the consequences of warfare. We have become so sensitive to civilian death and suffering that we (and our ally Israel) attempt to conduct an antiseptic war where no one is harmed except *verified* enemy combatants. Those who are most critical of America and Israel's prosecution of the war against the Islamo-fascists who wish to destroy our democratic way of life want to hold us to an impossible-to-achieve standard of humanitarian conduct. Today, even one inadvertent civilian death is regarded as an atrocity. Our enemy has no standards of behavior to which he must conform in waging his war against us. Therefore, we are not waging war on a level battlefield. Critics demand that we adhere to the standards of conduct outlined in the Geneva Conventions yet the enemy is not a signator to the Conventions and does not abide by any of those standards of behavior. This double standard is absurd. Would General Patton have attempted to defeat Field Marshall Rommel by using only one tank against Rommel's one hundred? Would General Eisenhower have forewarned the civilians on the coast of France to evacuate prior to the launch of the D-Day invasion so that they would not be inadvertently hurt during the battle?

Those who wish to impose these standards on the conduct of war need to study history so that they might understand how war has been waged in the past. They will find that the Hellenic and Roman armies of Alexander and Caesar did not attempt to minimize civilian casualties during their wars. In fact, they often encouraged their armies to kill all civilians living in enemy territory; destroy their livestock, cats, dogs, and food supplies; and burn their villages to the ground. Captured enemy combatants were either enslaved or, more often, tortured and put to a slow and agonizing death. These were the accepted rules of war for the majority of conflicts up to and including those of the 19th and early 20th century. During World War I, the combatants used poisonous nerve and other toxic gases against one another, resulting in terrible suffering and death. During World War II, Allied and Axis air forces dropped bombs on large metropolitan cities such as London, Berlin, Dresden, and ultimately, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

There is no such thing as a "clean war". During the War Between the States, General William Tecumseh Sherman observed, "War is Hell." He was absolutely right. War is hell - atrocities are committed, civilians die, prisoners are tortured, and horrific weapons of mass destruction are deployed. No sane person wants war. Today, however, we are fighting against a fanatic religious movement that *does* want war. They glorify "Jihad" (holy war), recruit children and the retarded as killers, and promise paradise for those who kill themselves in the process of committing atrocities against civilians - men, women, and children. They purposely hide and launch attacks from civilian-occupied villages, towns and cities. They store their weapons and hide out in schools, mosques, and hospitals which most of the civilized world regard as "out-of-bounds" for warfare.

When captured, our military (and civilian) personnel are tortured and executed in grotesque ways. However, we hold ourselves to standards of conduct regarding prisoners which are impossible to achieve. Even a single case of a captured militant being subjected to *torture*

brings forth demands for judicial prosecution of our military and political leaders. *Torture*, for critics of the war, includes strip searches and sleep deprivation, exposure to extreme temperatures, hearing insults about family members, and, most egregious of all, waterboarding (simulated drowning). I have witnessed waterboarding and can testify that no one drowns, no one is physically harmed, and vital information is usually obtained from the subject - information that has saved military and civilian lives. Many of our military personnel are subjected to the technique of waterboarding during their combat training.

Now, war critics want to close down the holding facility at Guantanamo for those enemy who were captured in battle. They want to release the prisoners so that they may take up arms once again to fight against us. More than 60 of the enemy who have been released have done exactly that. How many members of our military and how many civilians have been killed by those released terrorists? Soldiers who were captured and exchanged during the War Between the States were released with the stipulation that they could not return to the battlefield. Both sides agreed to this condition. No such agreement has been or can be agreed upon with the prisoners at Guantanamo because they hold such agreements in contempt and would never abide by them. They have no code of conduct. But they know that we do and use that to their military advantage.

Our military has conducted the most honorable war in the history of warfare. We have gone out of our way to minimize civilian casualties, to safeguard mosques and Muslim holy sites, and to treat captured enemy combatants with respect and kindness. We use modern technology to pinpoint military targets and avoid civilian casualties as best we can. We do not level mosques, schools, or other buildings where we discover caches of enemy weapons. We give enemy prisoners meals that are the equivalent or superior to the food we give our own soldiers. We provide them with copies of their holy book and allow them to worship while in captivity. Yet, thanks to the American press and war critics, much of the world regards our military as a horde of torturers and barbarians.

It's about time the American public demands a politically-free prosecution of this war. It's time we honor those who are doing their best to insure that there is not another 9/11-style attack on America. The future of our country and our way of life depends on our winning this war and eradicating those who wish to destroy us. Please let us all wake up and realize that this is war and war is hell. The alternative to winning this war is *worse* than hell.

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