

# Iraq is not Viet Nam

by Bill Winney

I believe the basis of the present debate in Congress seriously misinterprets last November's election. It is clear that the Occupation of Iraq was mismanaged and I believe the election mirrored just that.

The stark and clearly stated goal of radical Islamic Jihad is the complete destruction of the United States.

The loss of seats in, and control of, Congress last November was in reality a mediocre showing for an opposition party in an administration's sixth year. While disturbing, the loss of Congress by the Republican Party holds no historic mandate.

Current Congressional debate centers around the perception that this nation can simply walk away from the fight in Iraq unscathed and with our influence in the world untouched. This belief turns on the assumption that our place in the world is assured and pre-eminence is ours for eternity.

Not true.

Pre-eminence will be ours only so long as we face challenges courageously and inventively. Yankee ingenuity has stood us in good stead for the two hundred plus years of our Republic.

For example: At the height of the Cold War Soviet military theorists complained that the only notable thing about American Military Doctrine was our willingness to ignore that Doctrine. This acknowledged our Yankee ingenuity in problem solving when faced with the invariable situation that did not quite fit military doctrine.

In an echo of Viet Nam we find ourselves mired in a war seemingly without solution. Our nation entered the war in Viet Nam for altruistic reasons. Although that war was an element of the "Domino Theory" of containing the Communist Bloc, we also thought that we could establish a democracy there.

We foundered on the combination of a Pentagon Bureaucracy that thought it could win that war "On the margin" and the determination of North Vietnamese leaders to bleed us.

Their goal: expel any foreign power from the soil of Viet Nam. Today Viet Nam has become a major trading partner and is slowly migrating towards a democracy.

What must we do?

**First:** Candidates for President of the United States must be capable of illuminating the issues in the broad war against radical Islamic Jihad.

- Presidential Nominees must then speak to a course of action, cast in our long-term national interests, that represents our courage and ingenuity.

- The fight in Iraq must be viewed as one battle of a war. A war that is vastly different than any other ever fought by this nation.

The November election reflected the dilemma of the American people: we do not like throwing good money after bad, nor our sons and daughters into a meat grinder, yet we are willing to bear any burden and fight any fight in the cause of liberty.

Our nominees must inspire us. Simply walking away will represent a failure of courage that will haunt us.

**Second:** Congress must set about work that will support our next President and - more importantly - our sons and daughters in this broad war.

The Geneva Conventions are presently applied only against our forces in a very "one way" manner. These Conventions provide a two way street and Congress must make clear its intent to apply them in both directions.

For example: Use of religious shrines for offensive acts by insurgents subjects these shrines to damage from our return fire. Congress should make it clear that there will be no havens and, more importantly, that they will not accept the yellow press of non-governmental organizations and media that only holds our troops accountable while ignoring vast savagery by the insurgents.

- Congress must differentiate, in law, between criminals and prisoners of war. Many acts of radical Islamic sects border on the classic definition of piracy yet we continue to treat them as individual criminals. The world has changed and Congress must provide tools of law.

- Congress must modify Title 10, the section governing senior officer tenure, to ensure that Regional Commander's in Chief and Service Heads offer their unvarnished thinking. It is notable that between our Viet Nam experience and our current Iraq experience, only one senior officer departed in quiet protest.

**Third:** Congress must restructure the Pentagon process.

- The Pentagon seeks the *perfect combination* of forces for any given action. As if one from column A, three from column B, four from column C, and two from column D can produce victory at minimum cost.

Wars are won by overwhelming force. Wars are not won "on the cheap;" the Pentagon process is illusory - and costly.

- The Pentagon is blinded by a fascination with technology. Technology provides a clear force multiplier (in Pentagon jargon) but the services are ground between the millstones of the ever-escalating cost of technology and the ever-increasing cost of real people who control real territory.

The November election was a clear vote against poor management of the occupation of Iraq. The American people perceive this occupation as failing because of Pentagon ignorance of what it takes to control real estate.

This Congress must take up the task of developing a framework of law for our troops in the field and senior military leaders.

There are only a scant few candidates for President who are capable of recognizing, illuminating, and acting decisively upon the vast differences between Viet Nam and the war against Radical Islamic Jihad. The political parties must field candidates capable of vision and forthright action in defense of the United States.

Editor's notes: Bill Winney is a retired Navy Captain and a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. He also holds a Master's Degree (MSE Engineering Management, from The Catholic University of America). He was a candidate in the 2006 Republican primary for the U.S. House seat held by Barbara Cubin. He won in Laramie and Teton Counties and received 47.6% of the vote in Natrona County.

Capt. Winney served 30 years on active duty in the Navy, establishing his residence in Wyoming in 1978. Selected to the Nuclear Navy, he completed Nuclear Power School and Nuclear Propulsion Training Unit in 1974 and spent most of his Navy career as a submariner. He served aboard the USS Sturgeon (SSN-637), USS Hammerhead (SSN-663), USS Francis Scott Key (SSBN-657G), USS James K. Polk (SSBN-645G) and USS Benjamin Franklin (SSBN-640G) - all in the nuclear Navy. He was Executive Officer of the James K. Polk and Commanding Officer of the Ben Franklin. Winney was also commanding officer of the USS Holland (AS-32), which was awarded the Legion of Merit under his command. The Holland was a submarine tender.

Capt. Winney served at the US Strategic Command, Omaha, Nebraska, Chief of Command and Control ... National Propulsion Training Unit in Idaho Falls, Idaho as Leading Engineering Officer of the Watch, Responsible for Officer Qualification ... Staff, Chief of Naval Operations, Cruise Missiles Officer and Tomahawk Cruise Missile Program Coordinator ... Office of the Secretary of Defense, Staff of ATSD for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Warfare ... Staff, Chief of Naval Operations, SSN (Seawolf & Virginia Class) Acquisition Program ... and, Head Operations Officer (N-3), Commander Submarine Force US Pacific Fleet. Bill Winney is also FAA Certificated Flight Instructor, Single & Multi-engine, Land, and Instrument Airplane.

Bill and his wife Louise were married the day after his graduation from the Naval Academy. They have three sons, one of whom is in the Marine Corps and stationed in Iraq at this time, and one grandson. Capt. Winney is in the final stages of construction of the family's log home on The Hoback, Bondurant, Wyoming.

## 2007 Schedule - Cheyenne Herald

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