

Osama bin hiding

The notion that America's war on terror is deemed a success dependant upon the capture and or killing of Osama bin Laden is at best ignorant.

Osama the man, and Osama the idea, poses distinct problems. If the United States were to capture and kill bin Laden tomorrow, the war on terror would not be any closer to completion than it is at this moment. Why? Because there are still scattered terrorist cells that exist in virtually every country in the world, devoid of any signs of diminishing or being eradicated by their host nations prior to George W. Bush's declaration that enough is enough.

It is in the strength of the statement, "wanted: dead or alive" and the message that it sends that is far more important than the actual capture of bin Laden. We've remained quiet and apathetic about the seething dragon that lurks at our door. Sending the message that "we are coming to get you and we are coming hard," is just what the doctor ordered. The eyes of the world are upon us and we are not acting alone. The world is being forced to struggle through a battle of good and evil. Ideologies are the order of the day, but behind it all is the one world theocracy of money.

The war on terror is for the most part, a war on radical fundamentalism, as such; it requires that a change in ideology be made by those groups seeking to advance their opinions of what life is to be and rein terror on all who disagree, making them their sworn enemies. In the sixties, this country experienced hatred and bigotry and ugly racism. One people's ideas about another led to a war of terror on an entire race. It wasn't until there was a change in the mindset of a people so convinced that theirs is the only, theirs is the right, and theirs is the God blessed way to act, that change took hold.

Radical Islamists, like Hitler's Nazi Germany and the genocide of Jews in the millions, seek the very same thing as Der Fuehrer did. Their clerics regularly indoctrinate the faithful and the poor, capturing their minds and confiscating their souls.

Osama bin Laden, receiving 300 million dollars at age ten when his father died, and billions more later on, seized the moment in Afghanistan at a time when one of the poorest countries in the world was more than happy to accept his money and his message.

Instead of detractors reveling in the "ineptitude of U.S. intelligence services" and berating the brave men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States of America deployed around the world, cynics should focus on what has been done in the war on terror.

It is easy to sit behind a typewriter, completely out of the loop with absolutely no knowledge of command structure and the goals and objectives of the military apparatus which continues to hunt down the demon dogs of Islamic Fundamentalism and the desperate weak minded foot soldiers of the insidious Al-Qaeda movement.

On September 23, 2001 (just days after the 9/11 attacks) President Bush signed Executive Order 13224, which “blocks the assets of organizations and individuals linked to terrorism.” A complete list of those named is available from the U.S. Department of State, The Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism Washington, DC. “There are now 189 such groups, entities, and individuals covered by the Executive Order.”

In short, the gloves are off and our war is striking blows far more devastating than any capture of bin Laden could hope to accomplish. If he is alive, and I have serious doubts of that based on the reports of his number one who, once captured, began fessing up that he took Laden’s satellite phone to fool the U.S. surveillance tactics, he is in dire straights as are all other known terrorist organizations since the U.S. has frozen bank accounts and stopped the flow of money.

As far as eyewitness reports that bin Laden and the boys are at some luxurious mountain resort in Camp Pakistani, I could have sworn I saw Elvis at Mickey D’s near the turnpike. Unsubstantiated claims by God knows who, about the World’s most wanted diabolical maniac hanging ten on the slopes of Pakistan seem a bit less than credible to me. If bin Laden were to be encamped in any specific region of Pakistan our country’s military would have little problem tracking and following those so-called eye witnesses to bin Laden’s location.

The war on terror is not a war on one person. Comments made by President Bush in the wake of the September 11th attacks where he declared that bin Laden was Public Enemy No. 1 were certainly warranted, but also came at a time when the nation was still mopping up the carnage of the most horrific attack on American soil since Pearl and hungry for tough talk backed up by equally decisive action. The true war on terror is on the ideologies of the terrorist. Osama bin Laden is but one person and the President has time and again explained that this is an ongoing battle as he did at the onset of operations. If Laden is alive we will capture or eliminate him.

Embedded

How many times have you heard this familiar phrase uttered when someone was telling you a story? It may not have even been a story about anything funny at all, but beyond comprehension and reason in the tellers mind, “and the funny thing was, even with both of his arms blown off by an errant mortar shell, half of his leg amputated, the 7 year old boy still had the presence of mind to say *God Bless you* after I sneezed.”

War is hell.

Like most Americans, I was riveted by the first day’s coverage of the War with Iraq. Never before has war been televised in real time and with ring-side seats and backstage access to the spectacle and all of its horror, all of its majesty.

With the advent of 24 hour cable news networks, fierce competition arose to sensationalize and tantalize viewers already conditioned to 15 or 20 second sound-bites sandwiched between mind punishing graphics and ear blowing music lead-ins.

Massive fire power assaulting the airwaves in efforts to entice viewers into watching, satiated by the media's ravenous appetite for news stories that will quantify the public's lust for salacious and spectacular stories. Gavel to gavel coverage of Gulf War II, the redemption, has become priority one.

Then the implausible happened, the United States government announced that war correspondents were going to be given unprecedented access to the battle as it unfolds, with a few restrictions pertaining to troop movements and locations throughout the theatre of operations.

Step aside Edward R. Murrow, meet the embed reporter. A chance for the networks to beam the war direct from Baghdad to your living room was granted by the Pentagon. Correspondents were given crash courses in military training and etiquette, even learning how to don chemical warfare gear.

Adherence to stipulations that must be followed, edicts handed down from on high that pronounce "Thou shalt not give any account or release any information without the expressed written consent of the..." has fostered the belief that big brother's not only watching, he's telling the press what to say.

The grand experiment underway, Murphy's Law lurking in the shadows, the War with Iraq would spawn new ways to cover war that Vietnam era reporters could only dream of. Restrictions aside, live battlefield action and real-time reports within the confines of seemingly pre-packaged propaganda somehow fails to dispel the notion that war is sanitary, but is a far cry from censorship in any real sense of the word.

In a move that harkens back to World War II's "Loose Lips Sink Ships" campaign, the National Security Agency has launched a flock of ads urging military personnel to protect national secrets during this time of terrorist crisis. The same applies to the press and prohibits the dispersing of information about troop movements and locations, not the disturbing glimpses into the reality of war. Access granted, access denied, the middle gray area is where common sense comes in.

Shuttle Diplomacy

Instead of mourning the memories of the seven brave Space Shuttle Columbia Astronauts, Michael Anderson, David Brown, Kalpana Chawla, Laurel Clark, Rick Husband, William McCool and Ilan Roman, we would like to celebrate their spirit and childlike sense of wonderment, awe and discovery.

It is out of the spirit and innocence of a child that comes the dream to penetrate the surly bonds of earth and venture forth into the great unknown. These seven heroes demonstrated that the resolve and dedication to pursue such a dream is not limited to any gender or particular race over another, but is rather, a human condition of which there can be no squashing.

The shuttle's crew represented the diversity so prevalent in America today, diversity of race, faiths, and nations. They each knew the risks and weighed them against the reward, to be one of those few citizens of the world to gaze upon the planet from a god's-eye view and see the stars that they indeed must've wished upon as youthful dreamers.

Tragic as the Columbia accident is, the space exploration program must go forth. Whether it is under the hospices of NASA or not is another consideration entirely. There are and have been rumblings for quite some time now that would suggest privatization of the space program and this latest tragedy does not bode well for an agency that has made some pretty expensive blunders in recent years.

Not the least of which are the failed space shot to Mars where a robotic explorer failed to deploy its gear and lost communication with Earth shortly after touchdown on the red planet. The miscalculation by NASA scientists that prevented the billion dollar deep space telescope Hubbell from being able to focus, did little to bolster the agency's confidence or standing with the public and the politicians who hold NASA's purse strings and fate in their hands.

However, the aforementioned only results in someone losing his or her job and you the taxpayer left to foot the bill. The cost of human lives cannot be measured in terms of dollars and cents, of course. Neither can the resounding impact of the innovations and progress made as a result of the space program.

Clearly there are some major difficulties that need to be addressed before another astronaut is propelled into space.

Undoubtedly the safety of the mission crew must become a priority. Sadly, sacrifices are always made in quests of that which is worth dying for. Not to be overlooked is the fact that human error, mechanical malfunctions and fate supercedes safety precautions, no matter how elaborate.

The advancements and benefits to human-kind resulting from space exploration demands that we continue, at any cost, save the ultimate. If the spirit of the shuttle's crew teaches us anything, it's that with steely resolve and a collective goal in mind, the journey into space is not only necessary for the further development of the human race, it is innate to our make-up, to wonder and to wish upon a star.