

Military Resistance 10K9



[Veterans Day #1] “I Stood Among The Heaps Of Dead”

“I stood among the heaps of dead.

“They lay crumpled, useless, defunct. The vital force was fled. A bullet or a mortar fragment had torn a hole in these frail vessels and the substance had leaked out.

“The mystery of the universe had once inhabited these lolling lumps, had given each an identity, a way of walking, perhaps a social habit of address or a way with words or a knack of putting color on canvas.

“They had been so different, then.”

-- Robert Leckie, United States Marine Corps

MORE:

[Veterans Day #2]

Subject: Sgt. King Jeremy

[From GI Special, 11.11.2007]

[NOTE: Information that would identify the writer is removed to protect members of the armed forces and their family members. T]

**From: [xxxxxx; Ft. XXXXX]
To: GI Special
Sent: November 05, 2007
Subject: Sgt. King Jeremy**

I am a soon to be wife of a soldier, NCO, that served in Iraq with King.

He is held in the hearts of many and did more than most in his life time.

I found your story while doing research. I am an artist being asked to come up with ideas, and many a tattoo is wanted in honor of King out of 8-10 CAV.

It was just as hard to read your account of that day as it is to hear the words of that day being retold from the man I love more than anyone.

I remember talking on the phone with my fiancé the day it happened, he was close to King.

I pray for Kings wife and daughter.

As I sit here while my love sleeps, and I read this, I thank god I can crawl in bed with him, kiss him, letting him know how much I love him.

I can't help but feel guilty, and very lucky at the same time.

Not everyone understands, I think you know what I mean by that.

**Thanks again
[XXXXX]
Ft.[XXXXX]**

REPLY From GI Special: Excerpts]

On reading your letter, I was immediately reminded of another from a long time ago, written by Major Sullivan Ballou of the Second Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers.

It's reprinted below, following the article on Sgt. King.

Your letter, and the one below written 140+ years ago, have in common a clarity and directness of expression, and a fundamental honesty and goodness, that confirms the

view expressed from time to time in GI Special that those who serve in the armed forces, and those close to them, are the finest people in America today.

Your letter gives good reason to publish again the article in memory of Sgt. King by Iraq veteran Justin C. Cliburn, 1st Battalion 158th FA Oklahoma ARNG, which you found in GI Special, along with your letter.

What you wrote is the finest letter of this war, so far, bar none. There are many troops and loved ones who will find their hearts lifted by your words.

Everyone who has served, or been close to someone who has served, will understand, and thank you.

Limitless respect,

T

The Radio
“Remember Jeremy King”
“A Soldier’s Death Isn’t Anything Like
The Movies. There Was No Patriotic
Music; There Was No Feeling Of
Purpose. It’s Just . . . Death.”



[From GI Special 5H29, August 24, 2007]

07/25/2007 by Justin C. Cliburn
[Iraq Veterans Against The War] [www.ivaw.org/]
Branch of service: Army National Guard of the United States (ARNG)
Unit: 1st Battalion 158th FA Oklahoma ARNG
Rank: SPC
Home: Lawton, Oklahoma
Served in: LSA Anaconda: MSR Patrol, one month. Camp Liberty, Baghdad: PSD/IP
Training, ten and a half months.

When I was in Mrs. Riner's junior English class at MacArthur high school, we were required to read a short story titled "The Radio."

The premise was simple.

A couple in the 1930s were given a special radio that allowed them to hear all their neighbors' conversations.

At first they were elated, but, ultimately, they were haunted by the miracle of their ability.

They could hear all the horrors of society that usually go unnoticed or are covered up and sterilized . . . and they couldn't turn it off.

They couldn't change the channel.

It took seven years, but I eventually went back to that story in my head and felt their horror.

August 24th, 2006 was a routine day for my squad in Baghdad.

We had gone to Traffic Headquarters and I had gotten to visit with Ali.

Business taken care of, we started to make the familiar trek back to Camp Liberty.

It was a hot day, over 120 degrees, and I stood up just a little higher than usual with my sleeves unbuttoned to let the air circulate inside my body armor and clothing. It had been a good day.

Back on Route Irish, we were on the home stretch when the call came out over the radio:

"Eagle Dustoff, Eagle Dustoff, this is Red Knight 7* over"
"This is Eagle Dustoff, over"
"Eagle Dustoff, I need MEDEVAC; my gunner has been shot by a sniper."

The voice went on to recite the nine line MEDEVAC report and I marveled at how cool, calm, and collected he sounded.

My squad leader plotted the grid coordinates and found that this had occurred only a couple blocks away from one of our two main destinations on Market Road.

"Cliburn, go ahead and get down; someone might be aiming at your melon right now", CPT Ray said.

Sergeant Bruesch concurred and I sat down, listening intently to the radio transmissions that I couldn't turn off if I wanted to.

Five minutes in, the voice on the radio was losing his cool.

"Have they left yet?! He's losing a lot of blood; we need that chopper now!"

In the background, you could hear other soldiers yelling, screaming, trying to find anyway to save their friend's life. At one point, I swear I heard the man gurgle.

Ten minutes in, the voice on the radio was furious.

"Where's that fucking chopper!? We're losing him! He's not fucking breathing! Where the fuck are you!?"

Every minute to minute and a half the voice was back on the radio demanding to know what the hold up was.

Every minute to minute and a half the other voice on the radio, a young woman's voice, tried to reassure him that the chopper was the way from Taji.

She was beginning to tire herself; I could hear it in her voice. She was just as frustrated as he was.

All the while, there I sat.

Sitting in the gunners hatch, listening life's little horrors with no way to turn the channel.

No one in the truck was speaking.

The music was on, but no one heard it. There was just an eerie silence.

All I heard was the radio transmissions; I watched as the landscape passed me by in slow motion.

I didn't hear wind noise or car horns or gunfire or my own thoughts. I was only accompanied by the silence of the world passing me by, interrupted only by the screams of the voice on the radio.

At this point, I was as frustrated as I had been all year. Where the fuck was that goddamn chopper and why was it taking so long?! What if it were me?

Would I be waiting that long? Would this pathetic exchange be included in the newscast if the guy dies?

I was angry, upset, frustrated, and anticipating the next transmission in this macabre play by play account. Forget about TNT, HBO, and Law and Order: THIS was drama. This was heart wrenching.

Seconds seemed like hours; minutes seemed like days.

Finally, after several more non-productive transmissions where Eagle Dustoff attempted to reassure the voice, after twenty minutes and a few more frantic, screaming transmissions by the voice, the man's voice was calm again.

"Eagle Dustoff, cancel the chopper. He's dead."

. . . and that was that. The voice had gone from being the model for the consummate soldier (cool, calm, collected, professional) to the more human screams and frantic pleading for help to solemn resignation.

Now, the voice was quiet.

“Eagle Dustoff: requesting recovery team. We can’t drive this vehicle back; we need someone to come get the vehicle and body. Over.”

“Do you have casualty’s information?”

“Yes. SGT King, over.”

I sat in that gunners sling in a fit of rage that I couldn’t let out.

I had to be a soldier; I had to keep my cool.

We all did.

I was so angry, I still am, about being an unwilling voyeur, forced to listen to the gruesome play by play of another soldier’s life and death.

We had been told that the insurgency was in its last throes, that they were just a bunch of dead enders. No, not this day.

Today, SGT King was in his last throes, and I was there to listen to the whole thing, whether I liked it or not.

A soldier’s death isn’t anything like the movies. There was no patriotic music; there was no feeling of purpose. It’s just . . . death.

I wasn’t there physically; I didn’t see him, but I was there.

Any sane person would have wanted to turn the channel. No one wants to hear the screams of a man losing his friend, but I couldn’t turn it off. We were required to monitor that channel.

Either way, it didn’t take long to become emotionally invested in it; was he going to make it? I hung on every word until I got the final, sobering news.

My truck was the only one in the convoy monitoring that net. When we got back to base, no else had heard it, and SSG Bruesch, CPT Ray, and I didn’t discuss it. I don’t think we ever did.

A few days later, I felt like I had to find out more about his soldier. I felt like I had lost a friend, yet I didn’t know anything but his name and rank.

Looking back on it, I should have just let it go, but I didn’t. Using the miracle of the Internet, I found out all I needed to know about the young man.

SGT Jeremy E. King was 23 years old. He was from Idaho, where he played high school football. He had joined the army to get out of Idaho and see the world.

He was one year younger than I was, and he was dead. He sounded like any of a number of teammates I played high school football with.

I've replayed that scene in my head more times than I'd ever want since that day.

I don't believe in fate or karma or any type of pre-destined events, but I often wonder what made that sniper hole up on North Market Road instead of South Market Road, where I often found myself.

I was fortunate enough in my time there to never have to call in MEDEVAC.

I didn't bury any of my comrades, but I will always remember what it was like listening to the miracle of modern communications, the radio, and for the first time in my life being terrified, much like the couple in the story over eighty long years ago.

This August 24th, remember Jeremy King:

Sgt. Jeremy E. King, 23, Of Meridian Died Thursday In Baghdad.



Jeremy King

Wednesday, August 30 2006 @ 04:20 AM EDT

Contributed by: River97

Views: 621

Star Telegram -- KILLEEN, Texas - A Fort Hood soldier from Idaho has died in Iraq of injuries sustained when troops came under fire during combat, the Department of Defense said Friday.

Sgt. Jeremy E. King, 23, of Meridian died Thursday in Baghdad.

He was assigned to the 8th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood.

MORE:

[Veterans Day #3]

From Major Sullivan Ballou, Second Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, To His Wife, Sarah:

Major Sullivan Ballou of the Second Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, wrote the letter July 14, while awaiting orders that would take him to Manassas, where he and twenty-seven of his men would die one week later at the Battle of Bull Run.

July the 14th, 1861
Washington DC

My very dear Sarah:

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days - perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write you again, I feel impelled to write lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more.

Our movement may be one of a few days duration and full of pleasure - and it may be one of severe conflict and death to me. Not my will, but thine O God, be done. If it is necessary that I should fall on the battlefield for my country, I am ready. I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in, the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter.

I know how strongly American Civilization now leans upon the triumph of the Government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and suffering of the Revolution. And I am willing - perfectly willing - to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this Government, and to pay that debt.

But, my dear wife, when I know that with my own joys I lay down nearly all of yours, and replace them in this life with cares and sorrows - when, after having eaten for long years the bitter fruit of orphanage myself, I must offer it as their only sustenance to my dear little children - is it weak or dishonorable, while the banner of my purpose floats calmly and proudly in the breeze, that my unbounded love for you, my darling wife and children, should struggle in fierce, though useless, contest with my love of country?

I cannot describe to you my feelings on this calm summer night, when two thousand men are sleeping around me, many of them enjoying the last, perhaps, before that of death -- and I, suspicious that Death is creeping behind me with his fatal dart, am communing with God, my country, and thee.

I have sought most closely and diligently, and often in my breast, for a wrong motive in thus hazarding the happiness of those I loved and I could not find one. A pure love of my country and of the principles have often advocated before the people and "the name of honor that I love more than I fear death" have called upon me, and I have obeyed.

Sarah, my love for you is deathless, it seems to bind me to you with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly on with all these chains to the battlefield.

The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them so long. And hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when God willing, we might still have lived and loved together and seen our sons grow up to honorable manhood around us.

I have, I know, but few and small claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me - perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar -- that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed.

If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battlefield, it will whisper your name.

Forgive my many faults, and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless and foolish I have oftentimes been!

How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot upon your happiness, and struggle with all the misfortune of this world, to shield you and my children from harm.

But I cannot. I must watch you from the spirit land and hover near you, while you buffet the storms with your precious little freight, and wait with sad patience till we meet to part no more.

But, O Sarah! If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the garish day and in the darkest night -- amidst your happiest scenes and gloomiest hours - always, always; and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath; or the cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by.

Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again.

As for my little boys, they will grow as I have done, and never know a father's love and care. Little Willie is too young to remember me long, and my blue eyed Edgar will keep my frolics with him among the dimmest memories of his childhood.

Sarah, I have unlimited confidence in your maternal care and your development of their characters. Tell my two mothers his and hers I call God's blessing upon them. O Sarah, I wait for you there! Come to me, and lead thither my children.

Sullivan Ballou

MORE:

[Veterans Day #4]

Comment And Reply

From: S
August 09, 2012 10:49 PM
Subject: Military Resistance 10H4: They Don't Go Out At Night

Serving 3-4 or more tours of duty must be very financially efficient for the Military, considering this countries whole history of Government Issue, that is GI, meaning, use and discard, in relationship to the troops from the American Revolutionary War on to today.

Can you imagine how much they'd have to pay if everyone only did one tour of duty like in Viet Nam? They'd had to reinstate the draft.

Those who die there, aren't a financial burden on the system, and the same amount come home and commit suicide, so they are no longer a burden on the system.

Don't get mad at me for pointing this out, or covering it with cute think tank lingo, it is simply good business and the way a Capitalist society, a society that operates for the benefits of the haves, using the have nots as expendable resources, works.

REPLY: T

The shift from a conscript to a volunteer army was designed to avoid repetition of the massive rebellion against the war in Vietnam undertaken by soldiers then, and, looking forward, was also based on the assumption that war against Russia, the defined enemy at that time, would be short, necessarily so with the assumed use of tactical nuclear weapons, at minimum.

Later, after the collapse of the Russian Empire, U.S. political and military command kept that status quo out of inertia, and much later also assumed the war on Iraq would be an affair of a few months, as the war on Afghanistan that preceded it appeared at that time to be.

Thus no need to plan for years and years of combat, they thought, with typical Imperial arrogance having nothing to do with reality.

By the time reality set in, the Empire's political leadership rightly feared reinstatement of the draft would greatly escalate opposition to the war on Iraq, and the reborn war on Afghanistan, given that a majority of the highly perceptive U.S. population by then opposed continuing the war in Iraq, and by last year, also a majority opposed continuing the war on Afghanistan.

Thus the inevitability of endless deployments for some troops, rather than the one year limit practiced during Vietnam.

Most members of the armed forces have not set foot in Iraq or Afghanistan. There is beginning to be open criticism of that fact within the ranks of those who are sent over and over again.

The rates of physical injury and PTS among those who have been deployed are off the charts, according to DoD reports.

The multiple trillions of dollars required to fund veterans' benefits, including disability benefits, are merely deferred, with most to come in future years.

The Imperial political leadership is faced with choosing between paying those multiple trillions for indefinite years into the future, or cutting veterans benefits across the board, which would be logical for a bankrupt Empire to do, were it not for the fear politicians have of the political firestorm that would bring on.

Dying capitalism has no solution to financial collapse; this is merely one more dimension of the broader systemic contradictions.

Having outlived its usefulness, it no longer is capable of operating successfully for the benefit of either the haves or the have nots, a state of affairs hidden behind the smokescreen of naked greed infesting the top of society, as those who can seek to grab what they can while they still can. "Après moi, le deluge."

MORE:

[Veterans Day #5]

“To A Shocking Degree, The Army’s Leadership Ranks Have Become Populated By Mediocre Officers, Placed In Positions Where They Are Likely To Fail”
“Success Goes Unrewarded, And Everything But The Most Extreme Failure Goes Unpunished”

“This Change Is Arguably One Of The Most Significant Developments In Our Recent Military History — And An Important Factor In The Failure Of Our Wars In Afghanistan And Iraq”
“Relief Of Generals Has Become So Rare That A Private Who Loses His Rifle Is Now Punished More Than A General Who Loses His Part Of The War”

By Thomas E. Ricks November 2012 ATLANTIC MAGAZINE [Excerpts]

Thomas E. Ricks writes the Best Defense blog for Foreign Policy magazine and is a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security. This essay is adapted from his new book, *The Generals*, out this month.

Looking back on the troubled wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, many observers are content to lay blame on the Bush administration.

But inept leadership by American generals was also responsible for the failure of those wars.

On June 13, 1944, a few days after the 90th Infantry Division went into action against the Germans in Normandy under the command of Brigadier General Jay MacKelvie, MacKelvie’s superior officer, Major General J. Lawton Collins, went on foot to check on his men.

“We could locate no regimental or battalion headquarters,” he recalled with dismay. “No shelling was going on, nor any fighting that we could observe.” This was an ominous sign, as the Battle of Normandy was far from decided, and the Wehrmacht was still trying to push the Americans, British, and Canadians, who had landed a week earlier, back into the sea.

Just a day earlier, the 90th’s assistant division commander, Brigadier General “Hanging Sam” Williams, had also been looking for the leader of his green division.

“Goddamn It, General, You Can’t Lead This Division Hiding In That Goddamn Hole”

He'd found MacKelvie sheltering from enemy fire, huddled in a drainage ditch along the base of a hedgerow. "Goddamn it, General, you can't lead this division hiding in that goddamn hole," Williams shouted. "Go back to the (command post). Get the hell out of that hole and go to your vehicle. Walk to it, or you'll have this goddamn division wading in the English Channel."

The message did not take. The division remained bogged down, veering close to passivity.

American troops were fighting to stay alive — no small feat in that summer's bloody combat. One infantry company in the 90th began a day in July with 142 men and finished it with 32.

Its battalion commander walked around babbling "I killed K Company, I killed K Company." Later that summer, one of the 90th's battalions, with 265 soldiers, surrendered to a German patrol of 50 men and two tanks. In six weeks of small advances, the division would use up all its infantrymen, requesting replacements of more than 100 percent.

General Collins removed MacKelvie on the very same day that his tour revealed no fighting in progress. Collins instructed the 90th's new commander, Major General Eugene Landrum, to fire the commanders of two of the division's three regiments.

One of those two, the West Point graduate Colonel P. D. Ginder, was considered by many to be a disaster. One man, a mortar forward observer, remembered that Ginder "almost constantly made the wrong decisions." He had been in command of his regiment for less than a month when he was replaced.

MacKelvie's successor, Landrum, was given a few weeks to prove he was an able commander, but by midsummer he too was judged to be wanting. Before he was relieved, Landrum fired the assistant division commander he had inherited, Sam Williams, with whom he had clashed. "I feel that a general officer of a more optimistic and calming attitude would be more beneficial to this division at this time," Landrum wrote. General Omar Bradley, the senior American general in France at the time, concurred. He topped off the dismissal by demoting Williams to colonel.

Within a few weeks, Bradley relieved Landrum as well, and sent Brigadier General Raymond McLain, whom he had brought from Italy to England to have on tap as a replacement when someone was fired, to take over the 90th Infantry Division. "We're going to make that division go, if we've got to can every senior officer in it," Bradley told him. Two days later, McLain gave him a list of 16 field-grade officers he wanted out of the division.

The swift reliefs of World War II were not precise, and while many made way for more-capable commanders, some were clearly the wrong move. Nonetheless, their cumulative effect was striking. The 90th Division, for instance, improved radically—transforming from a problem division that First Army staff wanted to break up, into "one of the most outstanding in the European Theater," as Bradley later wrote. Retired Army Colonel Henry Gole, in his analysis of the 90th Division, directly credits the policy of fast relief:

“Because incompetent commanders were fired and replaced by quality men at division and regiment, and because the junior officers of 1944 (who were) good at war ... rose to command battalions in a Darwinian process, the division became an effective fighting force.”

“Generalship In Combat Is Extraordinarily Difficult, And Many Seasoned Officers Fail At It”

Generalship in combat is extraordinarily difficult, and many seasoned officers fail at it.

During World War II, senior American commanders typically were given a few months to succeed, or they'd be replaced. Sixteen out of the 155 officers who commanded Army divisions in combat were relieved for cause, along with at least five corps commanders.

Since 9/11, the armed forces have played a central role in our national affairs, waging two long wars — each considerably longer than America's involvement in World War II.

Yet a major change in how our military operates has gone almost unnoticed.

Relief of generals has become so rare that, as Lieutenant Colonel Paul Yingling noted during the Iraq War, a private who loses his rifle is now punished more than a general who loses his part of a war.

In the wars of the past decade, hundreds of Army generals were deployed to the field, and the available evidence indicates that not one was relieved by the military brass for combat ineffectiveness.

This change is arguably one of the most significant developments in our recent military history—and an important factor in the failure of our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“To A Shocking Degree, The Army's Leadership Ranks Have Become Populated By Mediocre Officers, Placed In Positions Where They Are Likely To Fail”

To a shocking degree, the Army's leadership ranks have become populated by mediocre officers, placed in positions where they are likely to fail.

Success goes unrewarded, and everything but the most extreme failure goes unpunished, creating a perverse incentive system that drives leaders toward a risk-averse middle where they are more likely to find stalemate than victory.

The Bush administration has been roundly (and fairly) criticized for its delusive approach to the war in Iraq and its neglect of the war in Afghanistan.

Yet the serious failures of our military leaders in these conflicts have escaped almost all notice.

No one is pushing those leaders to step back and examine the shortcomings of their institution. These are dangerous developments.

Generals are born, and generals are made.

The promotion from colonel to brigadier (or one-star) general is one of the largest psychological leaps an officer can take. It is richly symbolic: the promoted officer removes from his or her uniform the insignia of an Army branch (the crossed rifles of infantry, for example, or the tiny triple-turreted castle of engineers) and puts on a single star.

As brigadier generals, the newly promoted officers are informed that they no longer represent a part of the Army, but now are stewards of the entire service. They are expected to coordinate and control multiple branches, such as artillery, cavalry, and engineers—that is, to become generalists.

These people are given powers we accord to few: to save and take lives; to advise presidents on our most fundamental national issues; to shape their own institution by deciding how to select and groom their successors.

During World War II, top officials expected some generals to fail in combat, and were prepared to remove them when they did.

The personalities of these generals mattered enormously, and the Army's chief of staff, George C. Marshall, worked hard to find the right men for the jobs at hand. When some officers did not work out, they were removed quickly—but many were given another chance, in a different job. (Ginder, Landrum, and Williams were all given second chances, for instance—and all, to varying extents, redeemed themselves.) This hard-nosed but flexible system created a strong military, not only because the most competent were allowed to rise quickly, but also because people could learn from mistakes before the results became crippling, and because officers could find the right fit for their particular abilities.

In World War II, the firing of a general was seen as a sign that the system was working as planned.

Yet now, in the rare instances when it does occur, relief tends to be seen, especially inside the Army, as a sign that the system has somehow failed.

Only one high-profile relief occurred during the American invasion of Iraq, and the officer removed was not a general but a Marine colonel. Relief has become so unusual that even this firing made front-page news.

How did this transformation occur? Why has relief become so rare, and our military leadership rank so sclerotic? The nature of the wars the nation has fought since World War II is one reason. Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq were all small, ambiguous, increasingly unpopular wars, and in each, success was harder to define than it was in World War II.

Firing generals seemed to send a signal to the public that the war was going poorly.

But that is only a partial explanation.

Changes in our broader society are also to blame.

“The Nation’s Generals Also Began Acting Less Like Stewards Of A Profession, Responsible To The Public At Large, And More Like Members Of A Guild, Looking Out Primarily For Their Own Interests”

During the 1950s, the military, like much of the nation, became more “corporate”—less tolerant of the maverick and more likely to favor conformist “organization men.”

As a large, bureaucratized national-security establishment developed to wage the Cold War, the nation’s generals also began acting less like stewards of a profession, responsible to the public at large, and more like members of a guild, looking out primarily for their own interests.

In Vietnam, the consequences of this shift in Army practices became painfully evident.

Almost no generals were fired in that war, and those few who were removed were only the top men, ousted by civilian leaders in Washington — generals did not fire other generals. Not coincidentally, appropriate risk-taking diminished (the art of combat pursuit was almost lost in Vietnam), and a “cover your ass” mentality took hold.

These corrosive tendencies were reinforced by a new policy of officer rotation after six months in command, which encouraged many leaders to simply keep their heads down until they could move on — and likewise encouraged superior officers to wait out the tours of bad officers serving beneath them.

Instead of weeding out bad officers, senior leaders tended to closely supervise them, encouraging habits of micromanagement that plague the Army to this day.

Mediocrity also led to mendacity: Almost forgotten now is that an Army investigation of the 1968 massacre of hundreds of Vietnamese villagers by troops of the 23rd “Americal” Division concluded that 28 officers, including four colonels and two generals, appeared to have committed offenses in covering up the incident.

Even after the extent of the massacre and the subsequent cover-up were revealed, Major General Samuel Koster, who had commanded the Americal and who had been implicated in the cover-up, was allowed to remain in uniform for another 23 months, and was never brought to trial (although he was eventually demoted).

The Army famously rebuilt itself after the Vietnam War ended. It improved training; reequipped itself with a new array of tanks, helicopters, and armored vehicles; and, most significant, learned how to live without a draft, relying instead on a more professional “all volunteer” force. These developments, combined with a successful offensive in the 1991 Gulf War, led to a resurgence of American pride in the military, and a newfound veneration for military leaders.

Yet despite this otherwise magnificent rebuilding effort, the Army did not change its approach to generalship. The generation of leaders trained in the 1980s and '90s were smart and energetic, but also conformist and relentlessly tactical, conceiving their role narrowly.

Relief remained exceedingly rare.

Nor did the relationship between an officer's battlefield performance and his or her subsequent promotions grow any stronger.

As an American civilian official then based in Afghanistan put it in 2007, "The guys who did well didn't get treated well, and the guys who did badly didn't get treated badly."

One-year rotations meant officers came and went without seeing the consequences of their actions, enabling almost all to claim that they presided over progress.

Many Americans remember the Iraq War as a string of mistakes by the Bush administration — from overestimating the threat posed by Saddam Hussein to underestimating the difficulty of occupying the country.

While that perception is correct, it hardly tells the entire story.

In 2007, Philip Zelikow, who had been the State Department's counselor as the war in Iraq descended into chaos, told me, "I think the situation is worse than people realize, and the problems are primarily with the military."

Discussing American generalship in Iraq over the course of the war, he added: "I don't think people realized how bad this was ... The American people believe the problem is, the civilians didn't listen to the generals. This is very unhealthy for the Army."

The U.S. Army in Iraq, Zelikow said, reminded him of the French army before World War I: "The military is venerated. It is the inheritor of Napoleon. The general is decorated with gold braid — but there's no 'there' there. There is an aversion to deep thinking."

"The Failures Of The American Military In Iraq And Afghanistan Were Not The Failures Of Frontline Soldiers"

The failures of the American military in Iraq and Afghanistan were not the failures of frontline soldiers.

American troops deployed to these wars fit and well trained. However, training tends to prepare one for known problems; it is the job of military leaders to prepare for the unknown, the unpredictable, and the unexpected.

Many of the generals leading the Army were not mentally prepared for the wars they encountered.

“The troops were good at what they were told to do, from day one,” observed retired Army Colonel Robert Killebrew, a longtime student of strategy and leadership, in a correspondence we had about Iraq. “Had counterinsurgency been invoked on day two, (the soldiers) would have adapted.”

For an example, Killebrew pointed to the 101st Airborne Division in Mosul, which in 2003, under General Petraeus, moved quickly to a counterinsurgency strategy and kept Mosul surprisingly quiet for almost a year. The problem everywhere else in Iraq, Killebrew continued, was not the troops but the senior leaders, who were unable to tell their soldiers how to counter an insurgency.

“As is often the case in war, the question is not whether the troops can adapt, but whether the leaders can. The troops, as always, paid the price of educating their leaders.”

In Iraq, it took more than three years for Army leaders simply to begin listening to units on the subject of what wasn’t working — that is, about as much time as the U.S. military spent fighting World War II.

“Generalship In The Wars In Afghanistan And Iraq Was Too Often A Tale Of Ineptitude”

American generalship in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq was too often a tale of ineptitude exacerbated by a wholesale lack of accountability.

Both wars began badly, with General Tommy R. Franks failing to understand what he was wading into.

In many ways, Franks is the representative general of the post-9/11 era.

He concerned himself principally with tactical matters, refusing to think seriously about what would happen after his forces attacked.

“I knew the President and Don Rumsfeld would back me up,” he wrote in his memoir, “so I felt free to pass the message along to the bureaucracy beneath them: You pay attention to the day after and I’ll pay attention to the day of.”

Franks fundamentally misunderstood generalship, which at its topmost levels must link military action to political results.

Most generals get the opportunity to lose, at worst, one war. Franks, who from mid-2000 to mid-2003 oversaw the U.S. Central Command, the headquarters for operations in the Middle East, bungled two.

Warning signs began flashing in late 2001, with his tepid effort to capture Osama bin Laden in Tora Bora, on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, about 90 miles southeast of the Afghan capital, Kabul.

Coming just three months after the stunning attacks of 9/11, the Tora Bora fight provided the best early chance for American forces to kill or capture the al-Qaeda leader. Yet Franks seemed inattentive, almost as if the battle were someone else's problem.

The Centcom commander did not see bin Laden's capture as crucial to his campaign, or as a goal for which he should risk casualties and a messy fight. He was content to provide air power, which dropped 700,000 pounds of bombs in the area of Tora Bora over a few days in December 2001.

The CIA officer in charge at Tora Bora was certain he had bin Laden cornered, though his team remained outnumbered on the ground. He repeatedly requested a battalion of Army rangers to help press the attack and seal the escape routes into Pakistan.

But Franks declined the requests, citing several reasons, among them his desire not to inject more troops, the time it would take to send them, and his sense that the intelligence on bin Laden's location was less reliable than the CIA believed. The best evidence indicates that bin Laden walked south into Pakistan in mid-December 2001, perhaps wounded in the shoulder.

Four months later, Franks made a similar mistake during Operation Anaconda, declining to provide adequate artillery support to light-infantry units that had pinned down several hundred al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters in the Shah-i-Kot Valley. Again, the al-Qaeda men escaped into Pakistan.

"I thought it was a very successful operation," the general said afterward. "I thought the planning that was done was very good planning, and I think the result of the operation was also outstanding." He seemed to believe that it was a net strategic gain to push the Islamic extremists from Afghanistan into neighboring Pakistan, a far more populous country that suffered from a shaky security situation—and possessed a nuclear arsenal estimated to contain scores of warheads.

Not long after the Anaconda battle, Franks spoke at the Naval War College, in Newport, Rhode Island.

A student heard his talk and then posed the most basic but most important sort of question: What is the nature of the war you are fighting in Afghanistan?

"That's a great question for historians," Franks said. He then went on to discuss how U.S. troops cleared cave complexes.

It was a sergeant's answer, not a general's. Franks "really was comfortable at the tactical level," concluded an officer who was in the audience that day.

Privately, Army strategists agreed with that verdict, according to an after-action review of the first part of the Afghan War, completed at the Army War College the following summer. Franks's headquarters suffered from "many disturbing trends," including "a short-term focus," the report stated. "The lack of a war plan or theater campaign plan has hindered operations and led to a tactical focus that ignores long-term objectives."

“Part Of The Problem Was Franks’s Personality. He Was A Military Version Of Donald Trump, Both Dull And Arrogant”

If Afghanistan hinted at Franks’s shortcomings, Iraq revealed them fully.

Historically, thinking about war and then arriving at actionable conclusions has been the core task of generals. Yet Franks seemed to believe that thinking was something others did for generals.

In his memoir, he refers to his military planners, with a whiff of good-old-boy contempt, as “the fifty-pound brains.”

Part of the problem was Franks’s personality. He was a military version of Donald Trump, both dull and arrogant.

His memoir, with its evasions and omissions, is not reliable as a historical record, but it reveals the man well. In it, for example, Franks claims that the troubled aftermath of the Iraq invasion “was actually going about as I had expected — not as I had hoped, but as I had expected.” Yet this assertion contradicted the formal planning documents produced by his subordinates before the war.

For example, one classified PowerPoint briefing given shortly before the invasion stated, under the heading “What to Expect After Regime Change”:

“Most tribesmen, including Sunni loyalists, will realize that their lives will be better once Saddam is gone for good. Reporting indicates a growing sense of fatalism, and accepting their fate, among Sunnis. There may be a small group of die hard supporters that (are) willing to rally in the regime’s heartland near Tikrit — but they won’t last long without support.”

Not long before the invasion began, General Eric Shinseki, the Army chief of staff, expressed concern that the U.S. force lacked sufficient troops to occupy Iraq.

When I asked Franks in August 2004 about Shinseki’s concerns, he dismissed the question, saying that Shinseki “didn’t provide anything that all of us didn’t already know.”

Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, who took over the Iraq War from Franks, states in his own memoir that Franks told him in June 2003 that American forces would be out of Iraq later that year.

In his book, published in 2004, Franks dwells on the variety of ways he had devised to start the Iraq War, but he has little to say about how he thought it should end.

He insists that he did a lot of hard thinking about post-war Iraq, but a chart he proudly reproduces in the book, outlining his “basic grand strategy,” shows nothing to support that claim — it is all about attacking, nothing more.

Franks and his staff devoted almost all of their energies to the mission of removing a weak regime and almost none to the more difficult task of replacing it.

This omission became disastrous, because no one in the Bush administration was focusing on the problem either.

In 2004, an official Pentagon review led by two former defense secretaries, James Schlesinger and Harold Brown, unambiguously concluded, “The October 2002 Centcom war plan presupposed that relatively benign stability and security operations would precede a handover to Iraq’s authorities.”

The following year, the head of the Rand Corporation sent a memorandum to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld stating that after extensive review of internal documents, his researchers had found that “post conflict stabilization and reconstruction were addressed only very generally, largely because of the prevailing view that the task would not be difficult.”

Despite the large strategic costs of his leadership in two separate wars, Franks retired, not long after the fall of Baghdad, to enjoy the American version of a Roman triumph, going on the road to make speeches for large sums and issuing his preening memoir.

“Sanchez Was A Tragic Figure, A Mediocre Officer Placed In An Impossible Situation”

He passed command of the Iraq War to Ricardo Sanchez, a fellow Texan and the Army’s newest lieutenant general, who understood the conflict perhaps even less than Franks did.

“I came away from my first meeting with (Sanchez) saying ‘This guy doesn’t get it,’” recalled Richard Armitage, who was the deputy secretary of state at the time.

Sanchez was a tragic figure, a mediocre officer placed in an impossible situation.

Iraq was boiling over, the Pentagon and the Bush administration were in denial, and he was operating within a confused command structure.

An inveterate micromanager, Sanchez sank into the details of his job, constantly correcting subordinates but failing to provide overarching guidance.

Like many micromanagers, Sanchez also tended to criticize harshly in public. “He would rip generals apart on the tacsat”—the military’s tactical satellite-based communications network — “with everybody in the country listening,” an officer who served on his staff told me in 2005.

Sanchez inherited no real war strategy from Franks or the Bush administration, and he did nothing to remedy that deficit.

This lack of any coherent strategy manifested itself in the radically different approaches taken by different Army divisions in the war.

Observers moving from one part of Iraq to another were often struck by the extent to which each division was fighting its own war, with its own assessment of the threat, its own solutions, and its own rules of engagement.

In western Iraq's Anbar province, the 82nd Airborne and the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment got tough fast, violently confronting local opposition.

The 4th Infantry Division, based in Tikrit, in north-central Iraq, operated even more harshly, rounding up thousands of "military-age males" and probably turning many of them into insurgents in the process.

Baghdad was its own separate situation, exceedingly complex and changing from block to block. Meanwhile, in far-northern Iraq, Petraeus and the 101st Airborne Division made a separate peace, ignoring many of the anti-Baathist rules promulgated by the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad and conducting negotiations with the government of Syria to provide electricity to Mosul.

One reason for such distinctly diverse approaches was that conditions were very different in each of these areas.

But another reason was that each division commander received little strategic guidance from Sanchez. Jeffrey White, a veteran analyst of Middle Eastern affairs for the Defense Intelligence Agency, wrote early in 2004, "Some observers feel that the various U.S. divisions in Iraq have thus far waged more or less independent campaigns."

Sanchez did not seem willing to learn from and adapt to the conflict.

Some commanders at the tactical level took effective approaches, but these were ignored or even discouraged by Sanchez.

For example, a Florida National Guard battalion stationed in Ramadi in 2003 was more adept at police work than most military units, because its ranks included many members of the Miami-Dade police force. It emphasized local policing, setting up an academy and an Iraqi force, and also helped cooperative sheikhs win contracts for reconstruction projects, as an Army intelligence officer who served in Iraq recalled to me in 2010.

"The Efforts Of (The Guard Unit) Were Consistently Undermined At The Theater Level By Military Leadership That Lacked A Campaign Plan"

But, the officer noted, "the efforts of (the Guard unit) were consistently undermined at the theater level by military leadership that lacked a campaign plan," as well as by the failings of the Coalition Provisional Authority.

When General John Abizaid, who had replaced Franks as the chief of Central Command, visited Ramadi, he was so impressed with operations that he told Sanchez to go there and get the same briefing. Sanchez did so, apparently rather unhappily.

“Sanchez came in pissed off that he’d been ordered to get a clue from (colonels and other field-grade officers) in the hinterland, and was in full attack mode,” the officer recalled. “He lit up the staff, told us we didn’t know what we were doing, and went back to Baghdad having learned nothing.”

Sanchez’s biggest failure was that on his watch, some units acted in ways that were not only counterproductive but also illegal.

Not knowing how else to put down an insurgency, some divisions indiscriminately detained thousands of Iraqis and shipped them off to Abu Ghraib prison and other detention centers, where the Army lacked sufficient guards and interrogators to hold and sort them.

Short-term thinking guided many of these decisions.

“In the summer of ’03, we all thought we were going home by Christmas, so there was no consideration for the long-term consequences of locking up the wrong guys,” recalled Lieutenant Colonel Russell Godsil, the senior intelligence officer for the 1st Brigade of the 1st Armored Division.

“Commanders just wanted all the ‘possible’ bad guys out of their neighborhoods until they left.” Where those Iraqis wound up was someone else’s problem.

When the world learned in the spring of 2004 that American soldiers had sadistically abused prisoners at Abu Ghraib, Sanchez treated the scandal as a breakdown of discipline among a few enlisted soldiers, rather than a problem caused by a series of leadership failures, most notably his tolerance of massive roundups.

An Army intelligence expert later estimated that more than 85 percent of the detainees had no intelligence value.

Even if widespread detentions were the right approach — and to this day, some Army officers maintain that they were — Sanchez failed to ensure that he had a back office capable of processing all those prisoners.

Because detainees were not sorted by political orientation, hard-core insurgents and al-Qaeda terrorists were able to use the prisons as recruiting and training centers.

Worst of all, Abu Ghraib was run by a small, undertrained, poorly led Army Reserve unit that amused itself by playing brutal games with prisoners.

The revelation of its crimes was the biggest setback of Sanchez’s year of command in Iraq—a black eye for the American military and the United States, and a major boost for the insurgency.

In a 2009 study, a veteran Army intelligence officer, Major Douglas Pryer, reviewed Sanchez’s performance.

“Perhaps most unforgivably,” he wrote, “based on his staff’s recommendations, Lt. Gen. Sanchez approved two interrogation policy memoranda that were, at best, poorly considered and poorly written.”

The main cause of the Abu Ghraib scandal was not lack of resources or training, he concluded, but lack of ethical leadership. “The fundamental reason why interrogation abuse in Iraq occurred was a failure in leadership. The answer is that simple.”

After the scandal broke, Sanchez contemplated relieving Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, the commander of the American jailers at Abu Ghraib. But he did not do so, he said, in part because she was due to rotate home in less than two months.

“Nor Was Sanchez Himself Relieved, Despite His Dismal Record”

Nor was Sanchez himself relieved, despite his dismal record. In a privately circulated essay on American generalship in Iraq, retired Army Lieutenant General John Cushman, a veteran commander and a leading Army intellectual in the post-Vietnam era, concluded that General Abizaid, Sanchez’s immediate superior at Central Command, should have relieved Sanchez of his post.

The military scholar Andrew Bacevich’s verdict on Sanchez’s performance in Iraq is harsh but fair:

“When Lieutenant General Ricardo S. Sanchez assumed command of coalition forces in Iraq in 2003, the first stirrings of an insurgency had begun to appear; his job was to snuff out that insurgency and establish a secure environment. When Sanchez gave up command a year later, Iraq was all but coming apart at the seams. Security had deteriorated appreciably.

“The general failed to accomplish his mission, egregiously so.

“Yet amidst all of the endless commentary and chatter about Iraq, that failure of command has gone all but unnoted, as if for outsiders to evaluate senior officer performance qualifies as bad form. Had Sanchez been a head coach or a CEO, he would likely have been cashiered.”

Given the record of his command in Iraq, it is startling that one of the preoccupations of Sanchez’s memoir is how the Bush administration failed to elevate him to four-star rank.

The end of the book dwells not on the mess he helped make of Iraq, nor on the American troops who were stuck there, nor on the American and Iraqi dead, but on how he did not get a promotion he believes he was promised.

As he was trying to salvage that promotion with officials at the White House in May 2004, Sanchez turned to an aide and uttered that most tired of Army lines: “Boy, am I glad to be leaving Washington. At least in Iraq I know who my enemies are and what to do about them.”

He was wrong, of course: Sanchez was even more out of his depth in Iraq than he was in Washington.

In the spreading war in Mesopotamia, he had only a dim idea of who his foes were, and even less sense of how to deal with them.

There is perhaps no clearer sign of how radically America's military culture has changed since World War II than Sanchez's entitled whine, which speaks not only to the decoupling of poor performance from consequences in the Army's leadership ranks, but to the expectation, civil service-style, that promotion should follow from merely putting in one's time.

Sanchez was succeeded in Iraq in mid-2004 by General George Casey, a deeply conventional man who tried to persuade the Army to operate unconventionally.

Casey was an Army insider — a four-star general and the son of the highest-ranking American casualty of the Vietnam War, a division commander who was killed in a July 1970 helicopter crash. He knew the Army needed to start operating differently in Iraq. He developed a formal campaign plan, something Sanchez had never done.

More significant, he asked two counterinsurgency experts, Colonel Bill Hix and retired Lieutenant Colonel Kalev Sepp, to review the actions of individual units and make suggestions. Sepp, a Special Forces veteran of El Salvador with a doctorate from Harvard, reviewed the commander of every battalion, regiment, and brigade in Iraq and concluded that 20 percent of them understood how to properly conduct counterinsurgency operations, 60 percent were struggling to do so, and 20 percent were not interested in changing and were fighting conventionally, “oblivious to the inefficacy and counterproductivity of their operations.”

In other words, a vast majority of U.S. units were not operating effectively.

His misgivings confirmed, Casey started a Counterinsurgency Academy at the large military base in Taji, just north of Baghdad. There, he gave newcomers a one-week immersion course in the basics of irregular warfare. “Because the Army won't change itself, I'm going to change the Army here in Iraq,” he told subordinates. Just capturing a known insurgent is not necessarily a tactical gain, the academy taught the students, if it is done in such a way that it creates new enemies. As the course's textbook put it, “The potential second- and third-order effects ... can turn it into a long-term defeat if our actions humiliate the family, needlessly destroy property, or alienate the local population from our goals.”

Even so, both Casey and the Army were slow to adjust.

For example, a key tenet of classic counterinsurgency theory is that troops should live in small outposts among the local people, to better understand them and to deter the enemy from controlling them. Yet in 2005 and 2006, Casey was determined to close small outposts and move his troops onto a few very big bases.

“By and large,” concluded Francis West, a counterinsurgency expert and Vietnam veteran who studied American military operations in Iraq, “the battalions continued to do

what they knew best: conduct sweeps and mounted patrols during the day and targeted raids by night.”

Torn and confused, trying to change course while under assault by a sophisticated group of enemies who adapted constantly, the American military under Casey did not make progress in Iraq.

In 2004, it recorded 26,496 insurgent attacks. In 2005, that number increased to 34,131.

Casey hopefully announced that 2006 would be “the Year of the Police,” but it turned out to be the year of bitter urban fighting, as Baghdad was consumed by a small-scale civil war. Fighting in Iraq intensified in July, especially in and around the capital. That summer there were an average of 50 insurgent attacks a day just in Anbar province, west of Baghdad.

By the end of the summer, the capital had been largely ethnically cleansed, with Sunnis reduced to a few embattled enclaves on its western side. Insurgents were detonating about 1,000 roadside bombs a week. An estimated 2 million Iraqis, most of them Sunni, had fled the country, and an equal number had been classified as internally displaced.

Casey and those around him did not seem to grasp how quickly the situation was deteriorating.

“Jack, I Just Came Out Of Iraq,” Fallon Began. ‘Could You Help Me To Understand What The Fuck Is Going On?’”

Admiral William Fallon, the American military commander for the Pacific, visited Baghdad in midsummer. When he returned home, he called retired Army General Jack Keane, an influential figure behind the scenes in Washington. “

Jack, I just came out of Iraq,” Fallon began. “Could you help me to understand what the fuck is going on? ... Casey is up to his ears in quicksand, and he doesn’t even know it. This thing is going down around him.”

(The following year, Fallon was reassigned to run Central Command, overseeing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but in early 2008 he was forced by Defense Secretary Robert Gates to step down after making disparaging comments to a journalist about Bush-administration policy in the Middle East.)

Casey’s lack of awareness began to undercut his support at the top of the Bush administration. On August 17, 2006, during a video briefing to top national-security officials, he said he wanted to stick with his plan to turn Baghdad over to Iraqi security forces by the end of the year. Vice President Dick Cheney, watching from Wyoming, was troubled by that comment. “I respected General Casey, but I couldn’t see a basis for his optimism,” he wrote later.

In the wake of that briefing, the vice president began poking around for a different strategy — and different generals to lead it. Among those he met with was Colonel H. R. McMaster, the author of *Dereliction of Duty*, a book about the failures of top American generals in Vietnam. The colonel told Cheney that the U.S. government should abandon

the view, held by Casey, that the American goal was to turn over control to the Iraqis as soon as possible.

In December, Casey was told to leave Iraq within weeks rather than in the spring of 2007, as he had planned. "I left not really understanding what the hell had happened," Casey said. He was replaced by General Petraeus, who took a sharply different approach, moving his troops out to live among the people and getting insurgents to stop fighting Americans by putting almost 100,000 Iraqi fighters on the American payroll. Petraeus ultimately extracted the United States from Iraq, but hardly left behind a stable democracy.

"The Tactical Excellence Of Enlisted Soldiers In Iraq And Afghanistan May Have Enabled And Amplified The Strategic Incompetence Of The Generals"

Bizarrely, the tactical excellence of enlisted soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan may have enabled and amplified the strategic incompetence of the generals in those wars, allowing long-running problems in the military's leadership culture to reach their full expression.

The Army's combat effectiveness let its generals dither for much longer than they could have if the Army had been suffering clear tactical setbacks.

"One of the reasons we were able to hold on despite a failing strategy, and then turn the situation around, was that our soldiers continued to be led by highly competent, professional junior officers and noncommissioned officers whom they respected," Sean MacFarland, who as a brigade commander in Ramadi in 2006 was responsible for a major counterinsurgency success, said at a 2010 Army symposium on leadership. "And they gave us senior officers the breathing space that we needed, but probably didn't deserve, to properly understand the fight we were in."

MacFarland's point is rarely made, and worth pausing over, because its implications are far-reaching.

Consider a U.S. military at the other extreme — tactically mediocre and manned with unmotivated troops. In such a circumstance, it is hard to imagine the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan being allowed to meander for years without serious strategic review and redirection. Yet meander they did, at the cost of many thousands of lives — both American and Iraqi.

Unless something changes at the top, it is not hard to see our future wars devolving into similarly rudderless messes, held together by the rank-and-file troops, who bear the heaviest costs.

A few reliefs might have broken the strategic logjam in Afghanistan and Iraq, but by now, even the vocabulary of accountability has been lost.

A fine essay by Colonel George Reed on "toxic leadership" in the military, published in 2004 in Military Review, bravely analyzed the problem but tiptoed around the obvious solution, saying only, "If the behavior does not change, there are many administrative remedies available."

Similarly, a 2005 Rand study of Army generalship found many deficits and made many recommendations — but you will not find terms like firings or relief for cause within it.

The report speaks vaguely and briefly of the need for more “performance departures.”

And a study done at the Army War College by Colonel Steven Jones at about the same time pointed to persistent problems with rotation and officers’ unaccountability, as well as an assessment system that tended to reward abusive leadership—but, again, it never quite mentioned the need for firing such leaders.

The erosion of the Army’s performance culture — at least in its highest ranks — has not left the service devoid of talented leaders.

But the Army continues to do too little to sort the average performers from the outstanding ones. That has long-term consequences for the caliber of military leaders.

A recent survey by students at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government found that good young officers have left the military in large part because of frustration with military bureaucracy and the sense that the armed forces do not have a performance-oriented system for managing personnel.

If George Marshall, the superlative Army chief of staff during World War II, came back today to run the Army, the first thing he would likely insist upon is accountability. And that would produce more-adaptive leaders, a necessity in the post–Cold War, post-9/11 world.

Almost certainly, Marshall would also restore the sense that the needs of the nation should come before the needs of the individual or even the service.

No one should get to be a general because it is his or her turn. This fundamental truth is all that needs to be expressed to justify a policy of rapid relief.

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AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Foreign Occupation “Servicemember” Killed Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan: Nationality Not Announced

November 9, 2012 Reuters

A foreign servicemember died following an insurgent attack in eastern Afghanistan today.

**POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE
BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WAR**

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

**Lawsuit Forces Obama Regime To
Remove American Citizen From U.S.**

“Terrorist” List:

**“The Government Decision To Remove
Salah From The List Before The Case
Came To Court May Indicate That It
Judged It Would Lose A Case, And Thus
Have Its Power Limited”**

As a result of the designation Salah was “not permitted to get a job, pay rent or a mortgage, pay for his children’s education, obtain medical care or even buy a loaf of bread without first obtaining approval from the Treasury Department,”

11/06/2012 ElectronicIntifada.net [Excerpts]

In an important victory for civil rights, Palestinian American Muhammad Salah has been removed from the US Department of Treasury’s list of “designated terrorists.”

The move was, which announced in notice yesterday on the official Department of Treasury website, came after the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), the People’s Law Office, the American Friends Service Committee and the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee filed a lawsuit against the government in September challenging the designation, made by the Clinton administration 17 years ago, as unconstitutional.

The designation was made by executive order, with no legal process, no limitation in time, and no process to challenge it.

Salah was the only US citizen residing in the US ever to be subjected to such a designation.

As a result of the designation Salah was “not permitted to get a job, pay rent or a mortgage, pay for his children’s education, obtain medical care or even buy a loaf of bread without first obtaining approval from the Treasury Department,” a release from CCR had explained at the time of the lawsuit.

The government decision to remove Salah from the list before the case came to court may indicate that it judged it would lose a case, and thus have its power limited.

Troops Invited:

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