

Iraq victory requires renewed resolve

by Paul A. Morin

America's stiff upper lip is starting to quiver. At least that's what one may deduce from many of the noises coming from the halls of Congress these days. Resolutions attempting to undermine President Bush could be dismissed as ordinary political posturing if not for the demoralizing effect it has on our troops serving in Iraq.

Paul A. Morin of Chicopee, Mass., is national commander of the 2.7 million-member American Legion, the nation's largest wartime veterans organization. Contrast today's rhetoric with Winston Churchill's resolve. "Never, never, never believe any war will be smooth and easy or that anyone who embarks on the strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter," Great Britain's World War II leader said.

The men and women of The American Legion know firsthand about the uncertainty of war, which is why we support the steps that the nation's commander in chief is taking to win the global war on terrorism, including his proposed troop surge in Iraq. Unlike the non-binding resolutions Congress is considering to repudiate the president's strategy, The American Legion passed its own resolution to support winning the global war on terrorism.

Resolution 169 states that The American Legion urges all Americans and freedom-loving peoples everywhere to stand united in their support of the global war on terrorism and united in their support of the troops who are engaged in protecting our values and way of life. Passed unanimously at The American Legion's National Convention, Resolution 169 is the heartfelt sentiment of blue-capped Legionnaires who want to express their gratitude and love for the brave men and women who voluntarily fight so others might live free.

Veterans of the Vietnam War remember what it was like to fight without the support of the people back home. Legionnaires realize that not only was their service honorable, but their mission was too. You couldn't separate the war from the warrior then, anymore than we can today.

Yet amazingly some Washington politicians who until recently were still quoting Gen. Eric Shinseki's 2003 call for more troops in Iraq now prefer a resolution of cut and run. If we were to choose that course, it would be tantamount to acceding to Al Qaeda's Al-Zawahiri's wish that we "Surrender Somalia-style." Moreover, this choice would be a punch in the gut to heroes like Conan Heimdal, a Utah National Guard veteran who was wounded in Iraq.

"Once we send our sons, daughters, husbands and wives, we must do all we can to help them secure the peace, sustain the peace and ensure a lasting peace for generations to come," Heimdal said. "We have won the war in Iraq. Give our soldiers the strength of a galvanized homefront so we can win the peace in Iraq."

Once upon a time, some of today's congressional critics of the war felt the same way. Sen. Jim Webb reflected on his Vietnam War service in a 1986 interview. "The thing we've learned is that you can't debate a war and fight it at the same time," he said. Now, even though we are in the midst of a fight, he advocates leaving Iraq "in short order."

Fortunately, some in Congress realize what is at stake. "Any resolution that could be construed by American forces that Congress has lost faith in their ability to be successful in Iraq should be rejected because it rings of defeatism at a time when we should be focused on victory," said Sen. Lindsey Graham.

Congress already gave the president the authority to fight this war. He does not need 535 micro-managers. "... (S)uch a resolution ... will send a mixed message of division to both our troops and our enemies," said Sen. Joseph Lieberman.

"It's a dangerous illusion to believe that we can depart Iraq," Lieberman said, "and the inevitable killing fields and terrorist violence will not follow us in retreat -- even to our own shores. That is why it is right and imperative that we recommit ourselves to success in Iraq."

Certainly surrender in Iraq means terror on our own shores. This is a war for all the marbles. This is a war in which our enemy openly states a desire to subjugate the world under an Islamic state with sharia law. America needs to once again find the resolve it had immediately after 9/11 when we were warned that this war against terrorism would be a long and dangerous undertaking.

In the darkest days of World War II, Churchill offered a warning that spans the decades and is apropos today. "Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival."

In short, freedom and terrorism cannot coexist.

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