

American Leaders Promise More Pain

Democrats, Republicans, CEOs, Generals United

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Just 32 years ago in 1975, former US President Gerald Ford (unelected to both the vice presidency and the presidency) served as master of ceremonies for the close of the Vietnam War. There are two images that remain seared in the minds of many around the world from that terrible 10 year debacle and defeat. One is a photograph taken by Hubert van Es during the fall of Saigon depicting Vietnamese civilians climbing to the top of an apartment building frantically attempting to board a US helicopter. The other is a photograph taken by Nic Ut of a young Vietnamese girl, Phan Thi Kim Phuc, her flesh seared by napalm in a US aerial assault. She is running down a road, naked and screaming.

Thirty-two years later, as much of the world celebrated religious and cultural holidays, and prepared to greet the new year 2007, its newspapers and electronic media outlets depicted photographs and video of the hanging of former Iraq Dictator Saddam Hussein. The 21st Century and the freedom-loving US government approved a good old style 1800's hanging in Iraq. Hussein, guilty of mass murder, swinging from a rope in a stairwell somewhere in Baghdad. In 1975, Ford and Kissinger gave a green light to Indonesia's invasion of East Timor which left some 200,000 dead.

As an aside, perhaps Americans should be reminded of its history with hangings and what's likely to come from 21st Century military tribunals. According to Wikipedia, "the largest single execution in United States history was the hanging of thirty-eight Dakota people convicted of murder and rape in the Sioux Uprising. They were executed simultaneously on December 26, 1862 in Mankato, Minnesota. A single blow from an axe cut the rope that held the large four-sided platform, and the prisoners (except for one whose rope had broken, and who consequently had to be restrung) fell to their deaths.[7] The second largest mass execution in United States history was also a hanging: the execution of 13 African American soldiers for their parts in the Houston Riot. Notably, both incidents involved ethnic minority defendants, and military tribunal judgments in time of war."

Appetite for Destruction

The two images from the Vietnam War and the photo's and video of the hanging of Hussein capture in vivid detail the end results of strategies and tactics designed and executed by incompetent American leaders. Failure is everywhere in the stills and video. Failure to manage risk, failure to anticipate, failure to understand, failure to have compassion for human life, failure to accept change, failure to realize that perception is often not reality. Title, rank or advanced degree have never been a barrier to poor decision making or the maniacal drive for power to ensure a lasting place in world history. On what basis can one make such an outrageous claim?

What's the record of the US leaders since 1975? Some of the highlights include: Vietnam War; Cold War (post Cold War mis-management); Iranian Revolution/Hostage Crisis; Iran/Contra; HIV/AIDS (1980's); Grenada War; War on Drugs; Panama War; Iraq War I; Iraq War II; Afghanistan War I; Somalia I (think Blackhawk Down); Yugoslavia/Bosnia War; Ethiopia vs Somalia War (US now backing Ethiopia); War on Terror; Israel vs Lebanon/Hezbollah (US backing Israel); Lebanon Stability Operation (200 plus US Marines needlessly sacrificed); botched presidential election of 2000 decided by US Supreme Court; 911 attack on New York City, New York and Arlington, Virginia; military tribunals; income disparity (US middle class disappearing); tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans; health care cost increases; record foreclosures and bankruptcies in 2006; 2007 recession looming; sanctioned domestic electronic surveillance, refusal to honor international treaties, nuclear proliferation (Egypt and Saudi Arabia will now build nuclear reactors); global warming; over 3,000 Americans dead and many more thousands maimed in Iraq II and Afghanistan I; military families on food stamps; unprecedented national debt, unreliable infrastructure (electrical grids, for example); 911 Commission and Iraq Study Group; and now trial balloons being floated for a return to military conscription.

But the nail in the coffin, so to speak, is that "The Vote" does not matter one bit. The 2006 mid-term elections in the USA sent a clear signal to US leaders that the time had come to get out of Iraq. And yet as the new year enters, Democrats and Republicans, CEO's and Generals are united in their support for a troop "surge" in Iraq. Those in charge in America are creating the conditions which lead to open revolt. When votes do not matter, when draconian laws and regulations weigh on people, when employment is uncertain, and there is no longer any outlet for expression, frustration and anger set in. That leads to violence.

Operation Roadrunner

And what do the folks in charge offer as solutions? Catch phrases and information manipulation. Over at the Pentagon the thinking on Iraq II is something like this: go long, go short, maintain, get out, go left, go right, go, go down. Is this what \$1 trillion a year buys. Meanwhile, the President, with his staff in tow, tells the American people. "...My heart breaks everyday for our dead soldiers and their families. Next question...Go shopping." Are you kidding?

What;s next!? Cartoon character Wylie Coyote briefs the Joint Chiefs, President Bush and incoming House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. Speaking on guarantee of anonymity, a source who was at the briefing said that, "Mr Coyote provided some keen insights that are applicable to the Global War on Terror, The War on Terror, The Long War, The Asymmetrical War, The Irregular War, The Calling of Our Time War. The President and Joint Chiefs were receptive. The Pentagon feels that if Mr. Coyote had the space, sea and land assets that we now have, he would have caught that Roadrunner whom we see as an example of your basic modern day Al Qaeda/Anti-American terrorist. Mr. Coyote was far ahead of his time in the use of technology from defense contractor ACME and his understanding and application of psychological operations techniques. We appreciate his timely advice."

The world waits in horror for a congressionally mandated commission co-chaired by former President Bill Clinton and Former President George Bush II to study every commission created from 2001 to 2008. Why not Homer Simpson and Sponge-Bob Squarepants?

What more can be said about the down right crappy leadership that the American public and

the world have endured for a little over three decades. Clinton promised “A Bridge to the 21st Century.” That bridge needs to be demolished and a new one built. Unfortunately it is going to fall to the next three generations to fix it, if they can. It’s time to listen to the words of Malcolm X, speaking at Oxford Union, UK in 1964.

“I read once, passingly, about a man named Shakespeare ,who wrote something that moved me. He put the words into a character named Hamlet who said, ‘To be or not to be’. He had a doubt about something. ‘To suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.’ Compromise. ‘Or to take up arms against a sea of troubles and, by opposing, end them.’ And I go for that. If you take up arms you’ll end it. But if you sit around waiting for the ones in power to change things you’ll be waiting a long time. In my opinion young people today, whites, blacks, browns whatever else there is, must realize that they live in a time of revolution, a time of change. Those in power have abused it and there has got to be change. A better world needs to be built and the only way it is going to get built is by extreme methods. I will stand with anyone, I don’t care what color you are, as long as you want to change the miserable condition that exists on this earth.”

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