

AFGHANISTAN

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AUG. 11, 2009 -- One would think by now that we had learned the lesson of Vietnam: i.e., is that you couldn't build and destroy at the same time. We'd come by day with gunships and flamethrowers and clear the Viet Cong from the village and then back to camp at night. Charlie would come back into the village at night and we would go again in the day. We didn't go forward. We didn't go back. We never controlled the area. We kept this up for ten years with 58,000 killed and 378,000 wounded. Then finally gave up.

As we said in World War II: "Be sure you own it before you do anything." Now in Iraq we've done the same thing. This morning they're still blowing each other up. Never complete control. In Iraq we should have announced that anyone with IED equipment or material had until this time next week to deposit it at designated places. After that, those possessing IED material would be publicly hung. Now you own it. Now you can set up schools for girls. But today, we put a picture of girls in school in the newspaper; claim "Mission Accomplished;" and squat, waiting for enough natives to be trained to take over. And the losers are supposed to train the winners. In the meantime, GIs are expendable.

Apparently, the Afghans don't like foreign takeovers or presence. The Afghans didn't like the British, didn't like the Russians, and now don't like us. This week's *The Wall Street Journal* relates under the heading "Taliban Now Winning" that: "The Taliban have gained the upper hand in Afghanistan, the top American commander there said, forcing the U. S. to change its strategy in the eight-year-old

conflict by increasing the number of troops"

After eight years, the question is not whether we need more troops, but whether the Afghanistan war is worth the life of one more troop. General Barrett McCafferty reports on TV that our commitment under the new strategy could take ten to twenty-five years. The problem is not our fighting men and women. It's the command. We have no idea of taking complete control – of owning Afghanistan. It's the policy of "build and destroy." Let's assume that after years of "build and destroy" we have won. Victory is ours. What have we got? Anyone that reads Elizabeth Rubin's report in last week's *The New York Times Magazine* entitled, "Karzai in His Labyrinth," will have to agree that at best we've won a narco state. Rubin reports: "The Afghan president is isolated and distrusted, and even if he is re-elected this month, that's not likely to change."

Afghanistan has never caused the United States any trouble. The terrorists on 9/11 were from Saudi Arabia. The now terrorists, Taliban, or militants were our allies in Charlie Wilson's war. We all agree that, if alive, Osama bin Laden is in Pakistan. As a kid I remember Sportin' Life in "Porgy and Bess" feeding coke to the longshoremen on the docks. In my eighty-seven years we have not stopped the U. S. consuming drugs and in twenty-five more years we're not going to make warlords like democracy and stop growing drugs.

Apparently, we Democrats, like the Republicans, believe that, in order to get reelected, we must keep the war going.

More troops? Afghanistan is not worth the life of one more troop.

Senator Hollings of South Carolina served 38 years in the United States Senate, and for many years was Chairman of the Commerce, Space, Science & Transportation Committee. He is the author of the recently published book, [Making Government Work](#) (University of South Carolina Press, 2008).

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