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disagree."

The truth as I see it®

Idaho Common Sense®



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McChrystal, Obama, their values

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General McChrystal was publically disrespectful to a superior officer, the President of the United States, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Graciously, the president allowed him to resign rather than fire him.

But, recall the history of General McChrystal's command in Afghanistan. The president selected him for this command and defined the mission. To the president's surprise, the General did his job, assessed the situation and told the president he needed at least 50,000 more troops or the mission would "risk failure," officials "persuading" him to delay his request and then ask for only 40,000. At the time, there were only 68,000 troops in Afghanistan, General McChrystal needing a near doubling of his troop strength.

Doesn't the size of the request show how critical the need was? Yet, it took three months of analysis and discussion for the president to decide General McChrystal's assessment was wrong, that he only needed 30,000 more troops, a little over half his real need.

Did the president cross the line from setting policy to attempting field command, something he is not competent to do? Does the president realize that while he defines the mission, the field commander best defines the resources needed to carry out the mission?

Why would a non-military president pick a general to command our forces in Afghanistan, and then refuse his recommendations, second-guessing a capable general? Isn't that the same as the "suits" in

the skybox hiring a coach and then telling him how many players to field and what plays to run? It doesn't work. It guarantees failure. In a game, you lose. In a war, Americans die.

Is this a Johnson or Nixon Vietnam presidency, Washington second-guessing its generals? Is this a Jimmy Carter presidency, fearful to take a stand, fearful to do what is needed?

Might we need either a Reagan or a Bush Sr. presidency? Iran released the hostages before Reagan took office, fearful of and knowing what would happen if it did not. When Bush Sr. decided to liberate Kuwait, he asked General Schwarzkopf what he needed for success and gave it to him. These are the behaviors of a commander-in-chief.

Which type of president stabilizes the world? Which type of president avoids war in the long term? Might Reagan's absolute resolve to protect American lives and American troops be precisely what helps avoid war?

Might Obama's and Carter's excessive saber rattling without action promote more aggression, more testing, more pushing, more dead Americans? Might Reagan's willingness to go to war help avoid war? Might Bush Sr.'s support of his generals in Kuwait be one of the best ways to guarantee success? Might presidential interference like in Vietnam lead to failure?

Are Washington politicians more concerned with political consequences than with right and wrong? Do they spend more time

trading favors and promises for their re-election than representing the Constitution and us? Might decisions based on principal rather than on feared political consequences be less complicated and easier to explain than the normal Washington back room political trading?

Isn't a near unprecedented situation such as this symptomatic of much more than a disrespectful general who needed to resign or be fired? Doesn't it represent much more than a few regrettable statements? Might it suggest a failure well beyond the general, a failure of the commander-in-chief to do his constitutional job?

I am not excusing the statements the general made, nor do I claim the president's failures as commander-in-chief justify them. But, isn't it worth understanding why this happened, what went wrong that a general would behave so poorly? Can the president possibly know more how to conduct a war than the general?

Can the president, the commander-in-chief, hold a dedicated, gifted general to a higher standard than he holds himself? Can the commander-in-chief who fails to support and protect his command chastise a man who fails to respect his commander?

Did the wrong man resign?