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as I see it;
trying not to
offend
those who will
disagree."

The truth as I see it[®]

Idaho Common Sense[®]



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Lead, follow or get out of the way

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General George S. Patton said, "Lead me, follow me, or get out of my way." Mr. President, are you listening? We are nearing the end of the president's second year in office and, as he promised, things have changed in Iraq and Afghanistan. But the question is not if things have changed, but have they improved.

The decision to go to war is political. The decision to end a war is political. But war itself is not. The president is expert at politics; the military is expert at war. The president must balance political realities with military realities. And during peacetime political realities often carry more weight than military ones. But during times of war, if military realities cannot carry more weight than political ones, should we even be at war?

The president, as commander-in-chief, must provide his troops the resources needed to succeed. And not just to succeed, but also to succeed minimizing loss of American life and secondarily, minimizing loss of innocent civilian lives. Isn't doing anything less a failure of command?

Is the president conducting the war in Afghanistan as it should be? Or is he allowing politics to supplant competent military judgment at the expense of American lives? Does the president understand the realities of war? The Civil War's General Sherman explained war saying, "War is cruelty. There's no use

trying to reform it, the crueler it is the sooner it will be over."

But President Obama has ended two key American strategies, suggesting he might not understand. The military previously provided excellent air support for the ground forces, minimizing the loss of American lives while maximizing success. But, there were civilian deaths because the enemy cowardly hides in civilian areas behind civilian shields.

And besides the bombing, Special Forces regularly executed night missions directed at selected Taliban leaders. The air support and the night missions were successful and saved American lives.

But the president ignored Sun Tze's advice, "The art of war is simple enough. Find out where your enemy is. Get at him as soon as you can. Strike him as hard as you can, and keep moving on." Air support for ground forces decreased more than 75% and the valuable and successful night raids targeting key Taliban leaders were nearly eliminated. Why? Why would the president reluctantly agree to give McChrystal more troops only to purposefully place them at unnecessary risk?

The logic for the loss of air support? Now that we have more ground forces, we can forgo some of the air support that resulted in civilian casualties. The result of this decision? Newspaper headlines succinctly answer the

question. Shortly after the policy change on air support they read, "Airstrikes in Afghanistan drop by almost half" and "Coalition eases up on Afghan airstrikes." Now that his policy has been in place the headlines read, "Afghanistan war toll hit high mark," and "U.S. military death toll in Afghanistan reaches 1,000."

And why the dramatic decrease in Special Forces night missions? They are deemed "too violent" and too risky for the civilians in the homes hiding the targeted Taliban leaders. Aren't these encounters supposed to be violent, overwhelmingly violent?

Well, how are Special Forces treated when they do their job? Remember the seal team that captured Ahmed Hashim Abed who was behind the ambush of four Blackwater guards in 2004, their bodies burned and dragged throughout the city, then hung from a bridge. The capture was violent, the seals risking their lives to capture Abed alive.

And the result of this daring and heroic capture? Maybe congratulations? Maybe medals? Neither. Three of the seals faced charges because of the bloody lip Abed sustained.

Mr. President, either bring our children home or listen to General Douglas MacArthur's admonition, "It is fatal to enter any war without the will to win it." If you decide to keep our children there, then lead, follow or get out of the way.

Dr. Bosley's book titled *The Truth as I See It[®]*, *Idaho Common Sense[®]* is hardcover, 374 pages, \$24.95 - available at the Idaho State Journal, 5th Street Bagelry and www.craigbosley.com. To contact him directly, you can email him at craig@craigbosley.com. His columns are available at www.craigbosley.com.

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