

The Best of Who We Are

By Holly Lisle

Second-guessing of the war doctrine by the retired military and staffers referred to by Jerry Pournelle (www.jerrypournelle.com) as the "104th Chairborne" was criticized by the Pentagon. [snip] I think that the biggest problem there is that 24/7 satellite coverage of the war did not allow the commentators time to develop a proper perspective on up-to-the-second news. Shooting from the hip always brings risks. (from a comment by Jim Woolsey responding to In Search of A Liberal Standard of Fairness.)

The immediacy of this new medium does present risks, and some room for big screw-ups. But while I haven't been impressed by the 104th Chairborne, I have been impressed with results yielded by the embedded reporters, and the shooting-from-the-hip views of the war we're getting from them. Not, probably, for the reasons y'all might suppose.

What people saw when they started watching our troops through the eyes of the embedded reporters was not this 'military movie' image that people get from watching too much John Wayne or ... hell, who's starring in the military movies today? Guys with big guns and Rambo attitudes. Or, God forbid, guys who look or act anything like you get from reading Stephen King, who is wonderful but who may be the most clueless man on the planet when trying to show what the US military is about.

People who are getting these news feeds are seeing our guys tromping down an alley to 'draw fire' which is the polite way of saying they're there so the bad guys can shoot at them. People around the world are watching them walk into towns and cities carefully, withholding fire unless they are fired upon.

They're watching our people helping the people they've rescued pull down statues of a dictator, and watching them hugging the

little kids that run up to them carrying flowers. They're watching our guys shooting when shot at, but not out of vengeance. When our soldiers over there talk to the cameras, they're determined to make it clear that they want to help the people who are there. Some of these US soldiers aren't even American citizens – these guys tell stories of having been citizens of countries at war, and of having had US Marines come in and rescue them and their families when they were kids, and feed them, and get them to safety, and then they say "I promised myself when I grew up, I was going to be a US Marine, so I could help people the way the Marines helped me." And they did it. Do you have any idea how incredible that simple statement is?

This is the face of the US Military that Americans never got to see before. We never got see our guys **helping**. We never got to see so clearly that our military forces are **us**, that they are doing what we would want to do in the same place. Kill the enemy because there is no better way to solve that problem anymore, but not with any joy; just because it is the only way to protect the innocent. And then get in there and protect the innocent.

Throughout history, war has been about winning, and that hasn't changed. But throughout most of time, the spoils of war have gone to the victors – battles have ended with soldiers charging into the conquered territory to rob and rape and kill. This continues to be the face of war much of the world still knows. No matter how bad things already are, they become much worse once the conquering army raises its flag.

This is not, however, war the way we wage it. Foreign kids are growing up wanting to be in the US Military not because they're the baddest asses out there, but because they're the **good guys**. Because they are a symbol of something honorable and just and right. Because they are heroes in the real honest-to-God sense of the word. And they put a face on heroism that makes others see it as a possibility for

themselves.

I find myself incredibly proud of our people overseas, who comport themselves with such honor and such integrity and such valor. And I am grateful to have been able to see the way our best people represent us in the worst of situations.

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