



High Army Suicide Rate & U.S. Foreign Policy

Reuters and other media organs have reported that the suicide rate in the United States Army is twice the national suicide rate and that Army suicides, including those recently released from active service, reached a new high in 2009.

The high suicide rate is related, in part, to the enormous stress of working in a job that involves almost daily life-and-death decisions. Overseas deployment in a foreign land and culture entailing long periods of separation from family is also a factor.

But why are American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan in the first place? Why do they remain there, and why is our military intervention in Afghanistan actually growing? Political leadership and our present mission remain incredibly vague.



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What does President Obama see as the ultimate purpose of our troops in Afghanistan? How about our continued military involvement in Iraq? How does he define victory in Afghanistan or Iraq — or in the whole Middle East region? Why is the United States propping up with American blood and treasure an Afghan regime rife with corruption that has repeatedly expressed its support for the radical Islamic Iranian regime? Will President Obama decide to expand the “war against terror” by invading Iran, even as he continues to support the Afghan regime?

More importantly, should a single man, even the President of the United States, be able to decide when to thrust our soldiers into the crucible of war? Should he even use our troops for “nation building” or, in general, to intervene in the affairs of other nations? And when troops are used for purposes other than defending their homes and country, with vaguely defined objectives and with no end in sight, is it surprising that the problems of stress and morale in the military would skyrocket? And is it also reasonable to conclude that these heightened problems may be a contributing factor to the climbing suicide rate in the Army?

Obviously, as our Middle East quagmire continues and even deepens, a growing number of soldiers must realize that something is terribly wrong with the sacrifices they have been ordered to make. Undoubtedly many do not even realize that under our Constitution the Congress must declare war (that is, the decision is not the President’s to make) — or that George Washington and other Founding Fathers recommended staying clear of foreign quarrels. If there were greater awareness of this among the soldiers — and the American people as a whole — there would also be a greater understanding that something is seriously wrong with U.S. foreign policy.



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