

Supporting Our Troops Scott Camil

I want to say that everyone I know supports the troops, we just disagree on what that means. How do you support the troops? When I joined the Marine Corps and when our friends and loved ones joined the military, there was a belief that those in charge would act lawfully and responsibly. Those that waved the flags, beat the drums and fanned the flames of war while sending us to the Meat Grinder in Vietnam did not really support us, they fucked us.

Supporting the troops means being responsible with their safety and honest with the citizens; this is not the case now as it was not the case in Nam. Using the troops responsibly means using all means of diplomacy to solve the problems and using the troops as a last resort. It means that you obey international law and that you use and risk the lives of the troops only when all other means of conflict resolution are exhausted. In this case, we are violating the U.N. Charter by invading the sovereign nation of Iraq. This makes the war unlawful. We are at war because the President doesn't have patience. Again, that is not how you support the troops. I find that to hide a greedy, oil soaked policy behind the Flag and the Troops defiles both the Flag and the Troops.

While the government screams the mantra, "Support our Troops," they cut VA benefits so they can give tax breaks to the rich -- what hypocrisy. Iraq has not attacked any other country since the end of Gulf War 1. The inspections have been very slow. Impatience is not a responsible reason to go to war or to expend the lives of our troops and it is definitely not how I would define supporting our loved ones in the military.

Do I or others against this war support Saddam? Absolutely not. Even if most of what they say about him is true, that still does not justify a vigilante foreign policy where we get to be the judge, jury and executioner. In this country, the fighting between Democrats and Republican is well known. Many people consider the selection of Bush in 2000 by the supreme court to be undemocratic. But when we were attacked on 9/11, we put our differences aside and came together against an enemy that was the aggressor and attacked us on our own soil. The overwhelming majority of the world put aside their differences with us and stood by us because they saw us as innocent victims. Why would we expect the Iraqi people to be any different or the rest of the world not to side with those they consider as innocent victims, the Iraqi people? They are being invaded by a foreign country that does not have the support of the UN. They have done nothing against our country. They also know that for 12 years our sanctions have been responsible for the deaths of over 500,000 of their children. Knowing this, why do we expect to be greeted by smiling Iraqis?

In 1991, 6000 Iraqi soldiers who tried to surrender were kept in their trenches by tanks while bulldozers buried them alive. At the time, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney sent a report to congress with an elaborate legal justification. Answering questions raised concerning this incident as it relates to the Geneva Convention's prohibition of "denial of quarter" -- refusing to accept an enemy's offer to surrender, the report said, "There is a gap in the law of war in defining precisely when surrender takes effect or how it may be accomplished. An attempted surrender in the mist of a hard fought battle is neither easily communicated nor received. The issue is one of reasonableness. . . Because of these uncertainties and the need to minimize loss of US lives, military necessity required that the assault... be conducted with maximum speed and violence." If you were an Iraqi soldier, knowing what happened in 1991, how anxious would you be to surrender to American troops? We scream about Iraq violating international law because they showed and questioned American POWs on TV. Look at how we treat the prisoners in Cuba-- which would you rather be?

In Vietnam, we had the fire power and the technology. We did not understand the culture and in the end, the only way we could have prevailed would have been to kill everyone in the North and South that did not agree with us. There was no way that they could fight us on our terms and have a chance against us, so they improvised and fought a guerrilla war. In 1991, the Iraqis got their butts kicked trying to fight conventionally (actually, trying to run from our fire power). If they have any smarts at all, they know they can't win conventionally so they are fighting on their own terms. That puts the US troops in the position of trying to destroy the will of the Iraqis to resist by knocking out their leadership and convincing the people that we are really the good guys (winning their hearts and minds). I remember when we used to say, "Grab them by the balls and their hearts and minds will follow." I know that this concept will not work.

Because we decided to invade Iraq against and without world support, we are now in the position of trying to limit civilian casualties for fear of losing the support of the Iraqi people and the people who did support our action. This puts our Troops between a rock and a hard place. We all know that the US can be victorious in the sense of rooting out and killing those in leadership and the military, but it also means that our troops will be there a long time and will never be able to trust those who lose loved ones and see us as occupying their land for their oil.

Being ashamed and appalled that our government is Violating international law and the Constitution is not wrong or anti American. As citizens in a democracy protected by the Constitution, We The People are the Highest Authority. The President, the Congress and the Supreme Court are all Public servants. We are the employers and they are the employees. The legitimacy of their power is derived from our acquiescence. Without our acquiescence, they have no legitimate authority. It is our duty to hold them responsible and to punish them when they go awry. In a Democracy, legitimate power has to come from the people. It is our duty to control our government.

I love America. What this means to me is that I love the Rights that we are guaranteed under the Constitution and without them we are no different than any place else. We must defend them against the attack they are now under. We know from the past that a classic tactic of our government has always been to infiltrate peaceful groups and then do acts of violence in order to discredit those with other ideas. Under Homeland Security, the Patriot Act and with the whittling away of Constitutional Rights by this administration which came to power illegitimately, there is no telling what is really being done by whom.

The press used to be considered the fourth branch of government in the sense that it was objective and helped to insure that the checks and balances in our Constitution were working. This is no longer the case and because the corporate media has now become the propaganda arm of the U.S. government, it is imperative that we support independent media. It sickens me the way the press treats this war as entertainment -- war, the new reality TV. I could hardly believe my ears listening to the media complaining about "Where is this Shock and Awe that we were promised," " this war is promised to be the most spectacular ever seen." The corporate media sells U.S. Imperialistic policy, doesn't ask the hard questions and treats this war as a sporting event. With the press now embedded, there is no independence; war policy and the press are one and the same -- it's all about access and image.

Recognizing that most of the world considers Bush more of a threat to world peace and stability than Saddam is a fact. It seems strange to me that we are more worried about Saddam than his neighbors are. When he was our ally in the war against Iran, we were fine with his conduct. One of the most dangerous possible outcomes of this aggressive foreign policy has to do with Bush and his lack of

understanding of logic and precedent. Bush has called Iraq, Iran and North Korea the "Axis of Evil". He has said that the U.S. has the right to preemptively attack any nation that we believe to be a threat to the U.S.. He then Preemptively attacks Iraq. If you were the North Korean government, you would have the right to believe that your country might be next and under the Bush precedent you would have the right to preemptively attack the U.S. North Korea has nukes and is considered a greater threat than Iraq so why attack Iraq?

Because shooting fish in a barrel is easier than fighting those who can fight back, and Because there is nothing to gain in North Korea -- they have no oil. This shows that perceived threat is not the real motive behind the U.S. aggression against Iraq. The U.S. can't really claim that Iraq's violations of international law are just cause for our aggression. The United States is the only nation ever convicted of terrorism by the world court. That was for our actions in Nicaragua. We told the world court to stick it . We are currently in violation of the U.N. charter by our attack against Iraq. The U.S. won't even be part of the new International Court set up in the Hague to deal with war crimes. So much for our respect for international law.

What does this say to the youth of this country? It says might makes right, Violence is the way to solve problems and the rule of law matters not. Before you condone the demonstrators for civil disobedience, look at the examples that our government sets for them. War is a failure of diplomacy and civilized behavior. Inaction by the people is a failure of Democracy