

"Writing the truth  
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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## The human price of “freeing the oppressed”

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How do you propose an appropriate number of dead Americans? How do you justify losing even one American life? Can there ever be an acceptable number of deaths? My inability to answer these questions is probably why I did not have the character to serve my country while numerous family members did? Maybe I could never grasp an understanding of necessary loss of life. But spend a few minutes with military personnel. They aren't confused. They understand. They know the risk. They love their country and are willing to “ruck up and close with the enemy”.

I am not attempting to minimize the loss of life. I cannot because I have relatives who have been in harm's way or will be in harm's way in the near future. My father was in the United States Navy in combat during World War II and my son is in Special Forces training. And I know very well what will occur when he finishes his training. If your loved one is killed in combat the fact that we are losing fewer lives now than ever before is irrelevant. In your family the casualty rate is 100%!

Approximately 3800 men and women in uniform have been killed in Iraq leaving an even greater number of mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and children with a huge, permanent void in their lives. I am having great deal of difficulty understanding this loss of life. I believe it will be years before we can accurately look back objectively and determine if the price we are now paying was worth it. I would like to look to other times, other wars, and the human cost of those wars. What was the human cost removing the “Hitlers” of history.

During World War II we lost over 300,000 military personnel during the same time frame we have been in Iraq. At Normandy over 1500 marines died on D-day alone! At Iwo Jima 6800 Americans were killed in only 4 weeks while 12,000 died in Okinawa in 82 days! Compare this to Iraq where we have lost approximately 3800 military personnel in four years! By another comparison, during the three days of the Civil War's Battle of Gettysburg there were over 50,000 casualties.

Closer to home consider traffic deaths on our highways. Approximately 50,000 people per year die in automobile accidents. In the 1980s we were facing an oil crisis necessitating reducing Interstate speed limits from 70 mph to 55 mph. An anticipated bonus was 5,000 fewer people were killed on the highways yearly with the lower speed limits. Now the speed limits are 75 mph. We are opposed to reducing the speed limits to save 5,000 American lives per year but speak with shock of 3,800 military personnel lost in four years!

We must be realistic about what is occurring. We are at war. During war military personnel die. During war innocent people die. And sometimes we wonder if the price is worth it. And we wonder if we are in the right place for the right reasons, the right place for the wrong reasons or the wrong place for the wrong reasons. But we are there, appropriately or not!

What can we do? We must always question our government. We must expect them to convince us the price is worth it whether it be the millions who died in past wars or the thousands who have died in Iraq.

Each human life is a gift. Admire those questioning the government asking if the loss of life in Iraq is too high (even though I agree with our presence in Iraq). We have soldiers dying and that questioning keeps our political leaders critically aware of the bloody price of their decisions.

I am still unable to comprehend “acceptable losses”. How can you view as good news that “only” 10 Americans were killed today because in years past that number would have been 1000? There must be a way to appreciate how critically important each life is while understanding the loss of life. There must be a way to grieve the loss of each life while understanding it could have been so much worse. There must be a way to make sure those lost lives, whatever number, are never in vain. There must be a way to determine the value of “freeing the oppressed”. There must be a way to comprehend what we owe the world but also how to determine when enough is enough.

I wish I had the answers but I don't. One of the army's “mottos” I found referred to a sword stating “draw me not without reason, sheath me not without honor”. We can debate whether or not we drew our sword with reason but our sword is drawn and we need to sheath it with honor! Our lost military personnel, our military, the citizens of Iraq, and our country deserve nothing less.