

WAR IS TOO CONVENIENT

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APRIL 28, 2011 -- Charlie Wilson's War is the only war we've won since World War II. Charlie Wilson, the late Texas Congressman, operating with the Central Intelligence Agency, routed the Russians from Afghanistan in 1989. Charlie and I served on our respective Appropriation Committees, and I kept funding the money to Charlie. The CIA operates on a "need to know" basis. I didn't know the details of the operation, but Charlie knew everything. For every problem the CIA found, Charlie provided a solution. Charlie even persuaded Israel to ship some of our stinger missiles to Pakistan to shoot down the Russian helicopters. This brought the end of the war and started the downfall of Russia.

Leaving the Senate in 2005, Charlie, thanking me for my help, told me: "We won that war because the Afghans don't like foreigners. Even the warlords don't trust each other." The White House now appoints Leon Panetta, the Director of the CIA, to succeed Bill Gates as Secretary of Defense and General David Petraeus as Director of the CIA. Secretary Gates directed the war in Afghanistan from the beginning as Director of the CIA. General Petraeus will now direct it from the CIA. Conducting wars with the CIA makes war too convenient.

I can hear "blood and guts" Patton in 1943 bellowing to 12,000 troops in the Dust Bowl in Bizerte, North Africa: "Oh Mars, God of War ... etc." We were jumping off to Sicily, Corsica, and Italy, and we didn't know anything about selected targets. All we knew was to go forward and take the area. And doing this, we took Africa and Europe in four years. Now we run the war from Nellis

Air Base in Nevada with the CIA selecting the targets and hitting them with drones. Careful about casualties, we fail our mission. After five years of attempting to take a valley in Afghanistan, we withdrew. Conducting wars with the CIA, wars never end – over eight years in Iraq and going on ten years in Afghanistan.

Back home, war doesn't bother people. There is no sacrifice. We've always paid for our wars – but no longer. I introduced a tax to pay for Iraq, but the White House put out the word my bill was "dead on arrival," and I couldn't get any co-sponsors. We keep the troops happy with short tours, showing the recent movies, and calling home every evening. The Pentagon stays quiet with promotions – over 100 Generals and Admirals appointed since 9/11. A retired Admiral friend told me that now the Navy has more Admirals than ships. And in both Iraq and Afghanistan, we're bogged down trying to change a culture. In Iraq, we're waiting for the Sunnis to like the Shiites, the Shiites to like the Sunnis, and the Kurds to like either one of them. In Afghanistan, the warlords are still in charge; they still sell their daughters, and Afghanistan is now a narco-state with the President, Karsai, as corrupt as ever.

Now the Congress is tied in a knot. We didn't cut programs or raise taxes to pay for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. We didn't cut spending or raise taxes for prescription drugs for Medicare. Grover Norquist of the Americans for Tax Reform has a majority of the members of the House of Representatives and forty-one U.S. Senators committed against taxes. Both Congressman Ryan and President Obama submit political plans to

pay down the deficit. Ryan's plan proposes to pay for Medicare by cutting Medicare and cuts programs in order to give the rich a tax cut. President Obama's plan raises taxes on the rich and, while it cuts spending \$4 trillion in twelve years, it borrows \$7 trillion during the same period. Neither plan pays the bill. We had the problem of soaring deficits in 1993. We cut spending and increased taxes even on Social Security, giving President George W. Bush a balanced budget and "surpluses as far as the eye can see." But Washington continues to play politics.

We all remember Charlie Wilson's war, but we forget Charlie Wilson's lesson. Afghans hate foreigners, and we are now the foreigners. This morning's news reports that Afghan Security Forces in uniform turned and killed nine of our troops. On CNN last night, a Muslim

appeared intent on doing violence at the Royal Wedding tomorrow. He said: "As long as the infidel does violence against us, we Muslims will do violence against the infidel." We continue to prove Osama bin Laden's cause. He said that he attacked the World Trade Towers because the United States was engaged in another Crusade against the Muslim world. He tried to get out attention blowing up the Air Force barracks in Saudi Arabia. We didn't pay attention. Then he helped blow up the embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. We didn't pay attention. Then he went after the *U.S.S. Cole*. We still didn't pay attention. Finally, his attack on the World Trade Towers brought our attention. But we keep proving Osama's cause. We have invaded Iraq, Afghanistan, have troops in Kuwait, are killing Muslims in Pakistan, helped overthrow Mubarak in Egypt, and now invaded Libya. War has become too convenient.

Senator Hollings of South Carolina served 38 years in the United States Senate, and for many years was Chairman of the Commerce, Space, Science & Transportation Committee. He is the author of the recently published book, [Making Government Work](#) (University of South Carolina Press, 2008).

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