

BRILLIANT NEW IRAQ STRATEGY UNVEILED: PROMOTE SUNNI-SHIA RECONCILIATION

Once again, the brilliant leaders of the US military have shown a complete ignorance of both the centuries-long Sunni-Shia rift in Islam and more recent US failed efforts to deal with it.

Think back to those heady days in the fall of 2007, when the ass-kissing little chickenshit David Petraeus returned from Iraq to Washington to defend his vaunted Iraq surge and to convince Congress to keep up the effort (while also shoring up political support for the Bush Administration, a long tradition for Petraeus). Perhaps because of all the false furor stirred up over the inane "General Betrayus" ad, Congress and the American public gave Petraeus and the military a pass despite a report card from GAO showing that by meeting only 3 of 18 benchmarks (pdf), the surge was an utter failure. As that document and other materials of the day pointed out repeatedly, the aim of the surge was to provide space for political reconciliation.

That effort, of course, failed miserably. Despite a relative stretch of peace, the Iraqi government that the US proudly hailed turned out to be brutally repressive and sectarian. And when the Sunni-led Islamic State invaded, Iraq's military that Petraeus proudly trained (several times!) melted away, leaving as the final line of defense the Shia militias that Iraq never disbanded. Those militias promptly set about committing atrocities.

And so what is to be done now? The geniuses at the Pentagon have decided that all we have to do is to mend the Sunni-Shia rift in Iraq:

The U.S.-led air war against Islamic State militants has frozen the immediate

threat from that group, and now is the time for Iraq's Shi'ite-dominated government to mend its rift with disenfranchised Sunnis, U.S. military officials said on Tuesday.

"Quite frankly, we need to see in Iraq political outreach that addresses the fact that some 20 million Sunnis are disenfranchised with their government," Lieutenant General William Mayville told a hearing on global threats facing the United States.

Inexplicably, not only did the next speaker, with an "intelligence" affiliation, not laugh at Mayville, he agreed with him:

Mark Chandler, acting director for intelligence for the Joint Staff, agreed, saying "one of the things that really concerns me going forward is if the Shi'ite forces believe that they can control ISIL (Islamic State) without reconciliation with the Sunnis."

Okay, maybe it is too much for me to expect these guys to know that the Sunni-Shia rift started in 632 and has ebbed and flowed in the intervening thirteen hundred and eighty-some years. But these guys really should be aware of the kerfuffle just seven and a half years ago. Even paying just a tiny bit of attention to what the military and the Bush Administration were saying in the fall of 2007 and then following the thread of what happened on the reconciliation front in the intervening years should show them that this idea has zero chance of success.

Pinning hopes for success in Iraq on reconciliation didn't work in 2007. Simply calling for it again while changing no other parts of US policy for the region is doomed to the same outcome.