

Deplorables and Disposables

by G. Murphy Donovan



Tone is always set at the top.

The early years of the 21st Century may come to be known as the era of invective. One candidate in the 2016 presidential election maligned voters as a “basket of deplorables.” That slur may have prompted enough indignation to give Donald Trump the keys to the White House. The new Commander-in-Chief has

been swaggering through a minefield of resentments ever since. Worse still, political partisanship inside the Beltway today now flies under a [military guidon](#).

The best example, of many, is General James Clapper, USAF, erstwhile Director of National Intelligence, a relentless, if not acerbic, critic of President Trump before and after the 2016 election. (See the CPB, Charlie Rose, interview on [election](#) eve.) General Michael Hayden, USAF, who at NSA presided over the 9/11 warning disaster, runs a close second. Hayden is now a hired gun at CNN, the far left network [where](#) fact and opinion are inseparable.

We should note here that demographic demonization that [surfaced](#) on the American Left during the 2016 election slanders the same manpower pool from which the all-volunteer force is drawn. Quality volunteers are in short supply today. Political generals make for dubious recruiting posters.

Alas, the new CINC has jettisoned the rebels that won the Oval Office only to huddle with the usual suspects, a troika of flags from three previous left-of-center American administrations, regimes where political correctness, strategic drift, and operational inertia were the orders of the day. Since 1979, “don’t lose” has displaced the victory ethic in the now indefinite and murky panoply of Muslim “[long wars](#)” worldwide.

Winning is now at best a martial oxymoron for American generals and the Oval Office.

Soldiering is still a blood sport for grunts, however; not just the obvious hazards of combat and war, but also the behind-the-lines savagery of military politics in Washington. Recent dramas in Africa are probative.

Take the case of Staff Sergeant La David Johnson, a green beret, captured and probably butchered by Muslim jihadists in Niger recently. Consider also the case of Logan Melgar another

Special Forces casualty in Mali, a soldier killed by friendly fire. Two “friendlies,” apparently US Navy SEALs, strangled Melgar.

Ironically, the two SEAL suspects were members of “elite” Team 6, out of NAS Norfolk, heroes of the 2011 Osama Bin Laden kill. It appears the Navy was stealing from the African slush fund and the Army was about to blow the whistle.



The Johnson and Melgar cases, at first glance, seem unrelated but a hard look suggests a dynamic link between the two atrocities. The Johnson incident speaks to a “cannon fodder” ethic, a cynical attitude towards repeat deployments, and associated “disposability” of volunteer servicemen, especially so-called elite troops, in the era of an all-volunteer military. The Melgar incident might be a correlate, where similar command indifference, callousness, or expediency has allowed a dangerous [lowering](#) of the ethos bar; diminished recruiting, training, and discipline standards, scraping the bottom of the social barrel if you will.

Any honest examination of hot button issues like sex/gender/preference and related “queer” [politics](#) reveals that even Marine and Special Forces officers are anxious, if not eager, to embrace career enhancing political correctness

at the expense of standards, readiness, and [effectiveness](#).

Integrity vacuums at the top matter. Quality in the ranks matters too. The chickens of decline, slick sleeves to general officers, may be coming home to roost.

The Johnson Case

Sargent La David Johnson's story, one of four deaths, could be the poster child for much that's wrong with operation arts at the small unit level. Poor intelligence, unreliable local allies, no air support, and no extraction plan contributed to the patrol fiasco. Indeed, American survivors had to be retrieved by the French.

It appears that Johnson was left behind, possibly captured, mutilated, and [executed](#)