

For justice we need vision and wisdom
By Davidson Loehr

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I'm not against war. I was an Army combat photographer and press officer in Vietnam, and at the time I believed in what we were doing. I love my country, wave my flag, but I am scared to see us lose our way now, as we are being herded into a wildly inappropriate response.

The mass murders of September 11th were not acts of war. They were crimes. The perpetrators do not represent a country or a religion. They are psychopathic criminals who deserve stern justice before an international tribunal.

Although these murderers represent the views of many around the world who see our military and economic policies as greedy, destructive and evil, we have no legitimate "enemy" to war against.

The Afghans are not our enemy. The Afghani people were earlier victims of the Taliban, and the country already has been bombed back to the Stone Age by the Russians during the war in which we trained Osama bin Laden. Arabs and Muslims are not our enemies. The overwhelming majority of the world's Arabs and Muslims are as outraged over these murders as we are.

Our experience in Vietnam taught us that we have no idea how to fight a guerrilla or terrorist war. All we can do with our oversized and sloppily-aimed weapons is slaughter more thousands of innocent civilians. Our president's advisors have treated this situation like a bad cowboy movie: "You're either with us or against us." But for years, U.S. policies have been criticized worldwide as helping create economic injustices that fuel this hatred. Not all nations will dumb down to our command. What then?

The economic implications of this Infinite War Against All Evil are staggering and suspicious. Our nation's financial reserves could be drained, including the Social Security piggy bank this administration has been so eager to tap. The result could be an economy of the very rich few and the desperate many.

"The blood of martyrs is seed," the Christian Tertullian said 1,800 years ago. He saw that having Christian martyrs would make Christianity grow. Osama bin Laden knows this too. He is luring us to water the seeds of even more radical anti-American martyrs. If we are suckered into it, he will beat us twice.

As our political leaders use the media to spur us on to kill, our nation's political and religious climates will become more exclusive and violent. We saw an early example in the interview between Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, when they agreed that America's feminists, pagans, gays, lesbians and secularists "make God Mad." and are partly responsible for the September 11th attacks.

Did Falwell's "God" really mean to slaughter devout Christians among the over 6,000 innocent Americans of many faiths and beliefs? Falwell-Robertson are America's and Christianity's Taliban. Both camps preach hateful little religions with a narrow, bigoted and vengeful God.

No, it isn't a time to turn the other cheek or negotiate spinelessly. The killers and all who helped them deserve death, in my opinion. I'm so angry I could pull the trigger myself. So could many others around the world.

But lunging toward the nearest pullable trigger reduces us to the level of the cheap little men who turned our planes into bombs. It isn't worthy of Americans. It isn't worthy people of faith, whether Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Unitarian, Buddhist, Taoist, Sikh, Hindu or the thousand other roads by which our fellow humans travel toward compassion and understanding.

"Infinite justice" isn't possible without infinite vision and wisdom. Right now, our vision and wisdom are inadequate to help us find any stable justice. As citizens of the greatest country on earth, we must do far better than bloody vengeance. Any idiot can pull a trigger. Only a very great nation can stop and think first. We are that very great nation.

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