

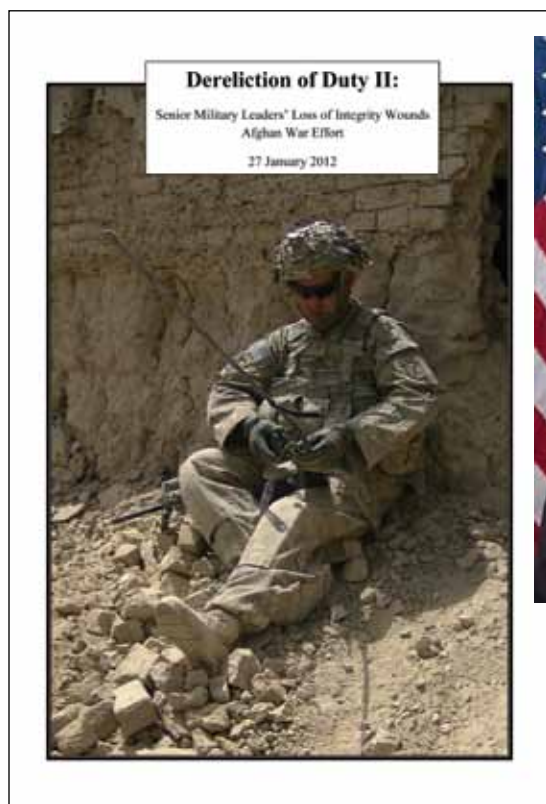
LT. COL. DANIEL DAVIS

## Officer Risks Career: ‘I Knew Too Much To Remain Silent’

by Carl Osgood

Feb. 20—Army Lt. Col. Daniel Davis, in a scathing 84-page report entitled “Dereliction of Duty II: Senior Military Leaders’ Loss of Integrity Wounds Afghan War Effort,” takes apart, with meticulous documentation, and from his own experiences, the lies of senior military officers and defense officials that are being used to mischaracterize the war in Afghanistan as some kind of success, when the reality is that it’s anything but. He not only names names, but takes on the largest icon of the war, Gen. David Petraeus (ret.), a virtual super-hero among some military and neocon circles, who believe that Petraeus snatched victory from the jaws of defeat in Iraq in 2007.

Davis demonstrates that the truth in Iraq is quite different from legend, but that the legend is doing us great damage in Afghanistan. Davis knows, by telling these unvarnished truths, that he has sacrificed his career.



*The report, “Dereliction of Duty II,” by Army Lt. Col. Daniel Davis (above), meticulously documents the lies of senior military officers and defense officials that have been used to misrepresent the war in Afghanistan as a success, when it has been anything but.*

“Why write this report when you know you’re going to get flamed by the Army brass?” is the question that many have asked of him, he writes. “Honestly, after all I’ve seen over the past decade and a half, I felt a moral obligation to do so. I believe that with knowledge

comes responsibility; I knew too much to remain silent.”

Davis has not only confronted us with the reality on the ground in Afghanistan, a reality that contradicts the official pronouncements about the war, but has also challenged members of Congress: Do you have the guts to put the future of the nation ahead of your own political career?

Davis’s critique first emerged on Feb. 5, in an article he authored for the *Armed Forces Journal*, and a profile of him in the *New York Times* that appeared the same day. By his own account, Davis was deployed to Afghanistan in 2010, as part of the Rapid Equipping Force, an acquisition task force set up to bypass the Army’s normal bureaucratic channels to get soldiers in the field what they need as quickly as possible. In the course of that assignment, he traveled over 9,000 miles, interviewed more than 250 soldiers, from 19-year-old privates up to two-star generals, as well as Afghan soldiers, police, and others, and walked patrols in some of Afghanistan’s most dangerous districts. What he saw and was told was at such variance with the official statements from Petraeus, who was the U.S./NATO Commander in Afghanistan until last July, and others, that he felt compelled to do something about it.

So, after conferring with his pastor, he wrote two reports, one classified, one not, took them to four members of Congress, briefed a dozen staff members, spoke to a reporter for the *New York Times*, and sent his reports to the Department of Defense Inspector General. Only then, did he inform his chain of command what he was doing. Davis had no intention of releasing his unclassified report without screening it through the Army’s public affairs office, but it was leaked on Feb. 10 by *Rolling Stone* magazine, making it available to a much wider audience.

If the Army has not yet acted against him, it’s likely because he has generated sympathy for his views on Capitol Hill. “For Col. Davis to go out on a limb and help us understand what’s happening on the ground, I have the greatest admiration for him,” Rep. Walter Jones (R-S.C.) told the *New York Times*’ Scott Shane. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Colo.) called him a valuable witness because his extensive travels and mid-level rank gave him access to a wide range of soldiers. And Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.) wrote a letter to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta suggesting that he set up an inde-

pendent panel to review the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan, citing Davis’s report, along with a very pessimistic National Intelligence Estimate that was leaked to the press last month.

On Feb. 16, *The Hill* reported that Davis had briefed five members of Congress, Reps. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), Walter Jones (R-N.C.), Jim McDermott (D-Wash.), Lynn Woolsey (D-Calif.), and Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), at their invitation, on the situation in Afghanistan.

The title that Davis chose for his unclassified report is itself significant. It refers to the 1997 book *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Lies that Led to Vietnam*, by then-Army Major H.R. McMaster, who is now a brigadier general. McMaster’s book created quite a stir at the time because he had taken on an icon of an earlier time, Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, who played a key role in the lies that he writes about.

### **Debunking Counterinsurgency Theory**

Davis’s “Dereliction of Duty II” is not simply an indictment of those leaders of the U.S. military for the deception they have engaged in with respect to what is actually happening in Afghanistan. It is, in fact, a direct challenge to the undermining of the institution of the U.S. military that has been underway since the Vietnam era. He goes so far as to quote Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, who compared the statements of U.S. military leaders concerning conditions on the ground in Afghanistan, with the infamous “five o’clock follies” of Gen. William Westmoreland in Vietnam.

In other words, the claims of “progress” are so at variance with the realities on the ground that you can’t trust any official statements that come out of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters, or from the military and civilian leadership at the Pentagon.

How did this situation come about? How is it that the leadership of the U.S. military is engaged in such delusion and deception and, perhaps, even outright lying, to claim that the strategy is working, when it clearly is not? What are the consequences for American troops in Afghanistan, for Afghans, and for the future course of America in the world? Davis attempts, with his 84-page report, to answer these questions.



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*While Gen. David Petraeus (ret.), now CIA Director, became a super-hero in the minds of some in Washington, for his “counterinsurgency” strategy in Iraq, Davis’s exposé sets the record straight.*

The first target of Davis’s report is the counterinsurgency doctrine that is being employed in Afghanistan. The man most closely identified with that doctrine is Petraeus, now director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. As is well known, Petraeus oversaw the development of the counterinsurgency doctrine manual at the Army’s Combined Armed Center in 2004. That doctrine derives from two historical sources: the U.S. experience in Vietnam, where the so-called CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support) program has been deemed a success by military historians; and the Anglo-French experience of the 1950s and ’60s, especially the British campaign in Malaya.

However, it is not the case that American officers came across the British Malayan experience just while doing their research. It was explicitly pushed on the U.S. Army by the British themselves. Maj. Gen. Jonathon Riley, formerly the senior British officer assigned to U.S. Central Command, during a panel discussion at the annual Association of the U.S. Army conference in October 2006, indicated as much. He invoked the image of the 1950s British campaign in Malaya “as the textbook example of counterinsurgency,” and suggested that that may be the model for the future.

British success in Malaya has been attributed to two things, Riley said: British experience in imperial policing, and the development of concepts and techniques for waging limited war. Riley cited the 1966 book by Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency, Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam*, which enshrined Malaya as the “touchstone” of British expertise in counterinsurgency methods, and said, “Now that the Cold War is over, perhaps the long view may give us a different perspective, although I think [Thompson]’s wrong to dismiss imperial policing, which one can characterize as expeditionary campaign to seize the territory followed by counterinsurgency to keep it.”

Petraeus incorporated these British theories (along with certain French theories with which he was also enamored) into U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine, and then took that doctrine to Iraq in 2007 as leader of the Iraq “surge.” The outcome over the next two years made Petraeus an icon of almost god-like proportions in certain circles in Washington. But did the doctrine actually work as advertised? Davis proves in spades that the surge had little to do with the turnaround in Iraq in 2007; rather, it was the Sunni insurgency’s break with al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) that did it.

AQI originally showed up as an ally of the Sunnis who were fighting the U.S. occupation, but it was so brutal towards the Sunnis that they eventually had no choice but to side with U.S. forces in order to get rid of this menace. Davis credits Petraeus with recognizing the significance of the Sunni Awakening that had actually begun in Anbar Province months before the first surge troops arrived. But he then quotes a number of U.S. commanders and former Iraqi insurgents to the effect that had the Sunni/al-Qaeda break never occurred, the surge and its accompanying strategy of “protecting the population” would have had little effect on the level of violence there.

The story that was told back in Washington, however, was that it was Petraeus’s “brilliant generalship”

that “won the war” in Iraq, a narrative that became so hegemonic, nobody could counter it. The failure to properly understand what had happened in Iraq meant that when it was time for the Obama Administration to make some decisions about its future policy in Afghanistan, the Petraeus template became the strategy. The problem is, there is no al-Qaeda anymore in Afghanistan, and there’s no “Awakening” movement to take a large portion of the fighters away from attacks on U.S. troops. As Davis documents, the civilian casualties have risen to their highest levels since the war began, and U.S. casualties rise and fall with the numbers of U.S. troops engaged on the ground, unlike what happened in Iraq. And yet the happy talk continues, as Davis thoroughly documents.

What may be the most important aspect of this part of the story, however, is left unsaid by Davis. He notes that AQI’s attacks on Shi’ite civilians inflamed sectarian tensions in Iraq, and its brutal treatment of the Sunnis alienated the Sunni insurgency. Left implied is that AQI, by its actions, prevented the Sunni and Shi’a resistance to the U.S. occupation from uniting, a strategy which bears the hallmarks the classical British method of controlling subject peoples by dividing them, and setting them against each other.

As *EIR Online* reported on Sept. 27, 2005, many in Iraq and the Arab world were already suspicious that the secret services of the U.S., Britain, and Israel were stoking the sectarian fires in Iraq. The same report noted that it was Anglo-American intelligence networks that set up what became al-Qaeda in the first place, under Osama bin Laden, during the Soviet war in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

### **Psywar Against the U.S. Public**

Davis devotes considerable space to the “information operations” aspect of the Afghanistan War. He documents conclusively that the information being provided to the American public is based, not on any effort to be truthful, but on political considerations. He cites a 2006 article in *Military Review* that advocated changing Federal law so that “Military Information Operations” could be more effective, by defining acceptable activities “that organizations may perform to protect a key friendly center of gravity, to wit, U.S. national will.” What has happened, is that the public affairs function, which, by definition, is supposed to merely inform the American public about military policies and activities, has become intertwined with the psychologi-

cal operations function, which, by definition, targets foreign audiences to influence them to support U.S. military policies.

The author of the cited article, as well as another one that Davis cites, completely ignores the possibility that U.S. public support for the war in Iraq might have been falling because of events on the ground there. This is reminiscent of those historians of a conservative bent who blame the U.S. defeat in Vietnam on the news media and the anti-war movement, rather than on anything that was happening on the ground. Without characterizing it as such, Davis is actually describing the Goebbels propaganda method—repeat a lie often enough and people will accept it as the truth without question—as applied by the U.S. military.

Davis realizes that the deception didn’t begin with, nor is it limited to the current wars. He describes his own involvement in two programs, the Advanced Warfighting Experiment (AWE) of 1997, and the Future Combat System (FCS) in 2003-07, to illustrate how the Army’s modernization programs have been victims of the same problem. The AWE was supposed to demonstrate the efficacies of “digitization” of an entire Army division to increase its speed and lethality. The idea was that information technology would make the division so much more lethal that its force structure could be reduced, thereby making it lighter and more agile. The problem was that the experiment showed that the only thing that was accomplished was to reduce its combat power.

Similarly with the FCS, which was supposed to replace the array of different vehicles and systems in an Army brigade with a single family of vehicles and reconnaissance systems all tied together with a network. Neither program worked, but Army leaders (probably encouraged by the contractors who were making billions off these programs) hid the failures from Congress and the American public.

Perhaps what Davis doesn’t realize is that these failures also proved that the whole Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) concept, which was the theory behind these programs, itself didn’t work: the notion that new information age technologies, combined with new operating concepts, would give us perfect knowledge of the battlefield and make us unbeatable.

The driving force within the Pentagon behind this concept has been Andrew Marshall, the director of the Office of Net Assessment since 1973. He’s an example of the permanent bureaucracy in the British

government that Franklin Roosevelt once complained about: “Governments come and governments go,” Roosevelt was reported to have said, “but the permanent undersecretary is always there.” Marshall has been the continuity of policy within the Pentagon on the RMA, and is also the force behind the Obama Administration’s “Asia pivot.” The RMA has been proven to be a failure several times since 1997, yet it remains the underlying concept for restructuring U.S. military forces.

### From Afghanistan to Iran?

The wide gulf between what is happening on the ground in Afghanistan and what our top civilian and military leaders say about Afghanistan has serious domestic policy implications. Davis writes:

“If the American people do not demand their leaders be completely honest with them, we all forfeit the ability to determine our own destiny. If our acquiescence for a war decision is gained by some leader telling us a version of events that will result in our support, but that version is not in accordance with what really exists, how can we know whether war or supporting a war is

really a good idea or not? Are the American people content to allow selected individuals, for reasons important to them, to decide when they are told the truth and when they are given fiction? When we tacitly know leaders don’t tell the truth and yet do nothing about it, we effectively surrender control to our leaders and give them free reign to do as they see fit. Already we have gone far down this path and as a public have already relinquished considerable control that ought to reside in the people’s hands.”

Davis has just described how we got into the Iraq War in the first place. It takes not only the deception and lies of the leadership of the country, but the corruption of the population to acquiesce in those lies. The exact same game is being played with respect to Iran, a war, that, if allowed to occur, would be far more devastating, indeed, civilization threatening, than anything we have seen up until now. Will the elected members of the Congress again “go along to get along” or will they put the fate of the nation ahead of their own political interests, and act to remove Obama from office in time to prevent this catastrophe from happening?

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