

# Why is this such a good war?

**By Dan Hammes**

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So how did this become the 'good' war anyhow?

Last week the Obama Administration announced plans to send more troops to Afghanistan. The announcement came as no surprise since President Obama, an early critic of the Iraq war, has long supported putting more troops into Afghanistan.

What is somewhat surprising is everyone likes the idea. That is, nobody seems to ask whether the United States should continue fighting in Afghanistan. Nobody asks what our strategy there might be. Nobody asks how we will know when we have won. And that is really odd given how the rancor and protest over the Iraq war really divided this country.

So n and this is not just a rhetorical question n how did Afghanistan become the good war?

That's not to say that there wasn't plenty of reason to question things in Iraq. The fact is the Bush Administration bungled the job early and for several years things went badly. But the vitriol of the opposition n including from many Democrats in Congress who actually voted for the war before they decided they were against it n was unseen in this country since Vietnam.

Today we are facing a war that by all reports is just as messy and difficult to understand as Iraq ever was, yet there is very little opposition to Obama's plans to escalate things. It is timely then that the Pentagon recently issued a report that cited Pakistan as a greater threat than Afghanistan. And that, despite Obama's enthusiasm for waging war in Afghanistan, just might be the point.

It is time to declare victory in Afghanistan and get out.

If our objective in Afghanistan was to fight Al Qaeda and destroy training bases then our mission there is complete. Small teams of special forces, supported by local tribes and with overwhelming air support, decimated Al Qaeda. In essence, the terrorists saw the light.

Those who lived, left.

They moved to Pakistan.

Yes, they will likely return. But a better option than fighting a never-ending war with established bases and perpetual occupation would be to pay the Northern Alliance to keep tabs and matters and when necessary employ tactics used to win the war in the first place.

No reasonable person n with the exception of a junior senator from Illinois perhaps - would suggest an invasion of a nuclear-armed Pakistan as the next front in the war on terror. The only hope for success in Pakistan is massive amounts of cash for the government there. Cash for schools, cash for infrastructure, cash for health care, cash for a stable, friendly government. And yes, much of it would be stolen. It is, after all, a horribly corrupt place. But even if the louts abscond with billions and billions of our tax dollars, stabilizing matters there will be much less hazardous to Americans serving in the military and much, much cheaper than perpetual war in Afghanistan.

No matter how 'good' some people think it is. n Dan Hammes