

READY, AIM, FIRE—THE WAR ON TERROR? By Bob Waldrep and Linwood Bragan

On November 13, 2015 Paris suffered one of the most devastating terrorist attacks in recent years. Seven separate attacks were carried out by at least ten terrorists, killing 129 people and injuring 352. Although immediately believed to be an attack by radical Islamists, due to the planning and sophistication of the attacks, it was not believed to be associated with ISIS, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (also referred to as ISIL, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and considered by many to be an Islamic terrorist organization and/or cult of Islam). However, within hours of the attack ISIS claimed responsibility.

There was once a time when people were shocked by acts of religious terrorism, finding it difficult to reconcile a religious group with killing in the name of its religion/god (See sidebar for other notable acts of terrorism with religious ties). Now such acts have become so commonplace that, as shocking as they may be, they no longer surprise us – we expect them to occur – it’s just a matter of where and when.

While there hasn’t been a major act of terrorism in the United States compared to that of 9-11, we are not immune to such activity. As recently as April 2013 two admittedly “self-radicalized” Muslims set off bombs at the Boston Marathon. And even though we have experienced few such incidents in our nation, acts of terrorism are commonplace in other parts of the world.

For example, during the same year of the Boston Marathon bombing, the U.S. State Department reported there were some 7,967 acts of terrorism, resulting in the deaths of 16,209 persons (an average death rate of 2.03 persons per event) and 28,488 wounded, carried out in nations with high Muslim populations. The following countries are included among those with the highest

death rates:

- Iraq with 2,495 total attacks resulting in the deaths of 6,378 persons (2.56 per event)
- Afghanistan with 1,144 total attacks resulting in the deaths of 3,111 persons (2.72 per event)
- Syria with 212 total attacks resulting in the deaths of 1,074 persons (5.07 per event – highest kill rate among Middle Eastern nations)



Interestingly, only 20% of the Muslim population lives in the Middle East, yet over 72% of the deaths and injuries related to terrorist acts occur there. And while it can be debated as to whether or not those who order or carry out such acts are “truly” Muslims or represent “true” Islam, they are very vocal in their claims to be Muslims and to be representing and/or obeying the teachings of Islam.

Despite the fact that acts of terrorism are occurring somewhere in the Middle East practically every day, it is not until an attack occurs in the West, such as in Paris, that those in the West suddenly seem to remember that groups like this exist. This is especially strange considering that it has been only ten months since the last terrorist attack in Paris at the offices of the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*. During the assault radical Islamists murdered eleven

people.

After that attack the world again awoke to the dangers of Islamic terrorism and held demonstrations in support of the paper. These included a large rally attended by some forty world leaders who marched in support of the paper and the French people. Notably missing from the group was any ranking official from the U.S. – the administration opting to send the U.S. Ambassador to France.

Yet, here we are again. Typically, when such attacks occur, our response is to express great outrage with little action. Instead, we debate the issues – who are they, are they truly Muslims, is Islam a religion of terror, how should we best deal with such groups – should we put troops on the ground, just bomb them, arm other groups in the area and let them fight it out, etc. At some point the discussion even turns to the past, and we rehash the debate as to whether or not we should have gone into Iraq in the first place. Within a matter of weeks the debate ends. Little or no action is taken. All returns to “normal” as we go back to our lives and put this behind us – at least until the next attack is carried out on us or one of our allies in the West.

Despite the talk, Americans across all spectrums recognize an effective plan to actually get rid of the problem is never given serious discussion, much less implemented. Perhaps this is due to the long wars previously waged in the Middle East and the cost paid with the blood of our sons and daughters. In addition, many Americans believe our leaders have given up all that was gained by such great cost. As such, there isn’t much of an appetite for another such war.

Perhaps due to the scope of this most recent attack in Paris, the current discussion might actually lead to some viable re-

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response. The French President is certainly taking it seriously when two days after the attacks he launched an air attack bombing Raqqa, the Syrian stronghold of ISIS. But will more action be taken and, if so, what will it look like?

Political figures and pundits alike are putting forth their opinions and these vary greatly. Here are just a few that indicate how diverse the opinions are and how far apart we are in reaching any agreed upon plan.

During a press conference on November 16, following the G20 Meeting, President Obama argued against adding “boots on the ground” and for continuing the administration’s policy to maintain airstrikes stating, “As I listen to those who suggest something else needs to be done, typically the things they suggest need to be done are things that we are already doing. The one exception is that there had been a few who suggested that we should put large numbers of U.S. troops on the ground. And it is not just my view, but the view of my closest military and civilian advisers, that that would be a mistake.”

Former Secretary of State and leading Democratic presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton seems to agree with the President stating at the recent Democratic debate, “It cannot be an American fight.” The following day she clarified this further stating, “We have to be rallying our partners and allies, pulling countries off the sidelines.”

Senator Rand Paul has repeatedly expressed a lack of interest in any involvement in the Middle East but regarding the President’s policy has stated, “I think if you’re going to war, sending 50 people to war at a time is sort of a recipe for being surrounded and somehow having a disaster on their hands.”

Not shying away from involvement, Presidential candidate Donald Trump has expressed, “I would just bomb those suckers. That’s right. I’d blow up the [oil] pipes,” Trump said. “I’d blow up every single inch. There would be nothing left.”

Using similarly strong language, former Senator Rick Santorum has stated, “If these folks want to return to a 7th Century version of Islam, then let’s load up our bombers and bomb them back to the 7th Century.”

Carly Fiorina, another Republican Presidential candidate, seems to favor having a

summit: “King Abdullah of Jordan has been asking for bombs and materiel. We have not provided them. He has gone to China. The Kurds have been asking us to arm them for three years. We haven’t done so. The Egyptians have asked us to share intelligence. We’re not doing it. We have Arab allies. They are not perfect. But they need to see leadership, support and resolve from the United States of America, and we can help them defeat ISIS.”

Among those arguing for ground forces, Senator Ted Cruz said, “We need boots on the ground, but they don’t necessarily need to be American boots. The Kurds are our boots on the ground.”

The question is not about whether we should have a plan to deal with ISIS – that part is obvious. But are we ready and willing to implement an overall strategy – to do something?

Senator Lindsey Graham takes it much farther as he believes, “It is just a matter of time that they will hit us or hit Europe if we don’t go in on the ground in Syria.” Graham has said there needs to be an American troop presence in the Middle East of as many as 20,000 U.S. ground troops and advisors in Iraq and Syria.

Bomb them, have a summit, arm and/or support ground forces from other countries, send in our own ground troops – all have been presented as options. Whether we do any or none of these, whether we stay the course or end up putting boots on the ground, what is missing from the debate is the effect it will have on our men and women who serve and their families. Where is the debate about how we can help those who have already served?

While we call for action to be taken in the Middle East, should we not also call for action to help those who have already fought the war against terrorism and fought the battle for freedom – be it in the Middle East, Vietnam, Korea, or the battlefields of Europe and Asia? Should we not also be discussing how we will care for our sons and daughters who will return from a war against ISIS? For we will pay a cost – freedom never comes without a price.

In addition to those who were physically injured, we have hundreds of thousands of

combat veterans from previous wars that suffer the effects of PTSD and Moral Injury. Each day more than twenty-two of our veterans commit suicide. This is a debt of war that is not being properly considered, much less being paid and without a proper response will only increase as we enter into new conflicts.

Even the President recognized this – even if unknowingly – in his press conference when he said, “When we send troops in, those troops get injured, they get killed, they’re away from their families. Our country spends hundreds of billions of dollars. And so, given the fact that there are enormous sacrifices involved in any military action, it’s best that we don’t, you know, shoot first and aim later.”

I don’t think any would argue with his point that one should aim, have a plan, before they shoot. However, one cannot take aim without having selected a weapon that will do the job. In other words, you need to ready the weapon before taking aim. The call isn’t to aim and fire, it is to “Ready...Aim...Fire.” No nation is better prepared – ready to take aim – than the United States.

The question is not about whether we should have a plan to deal with ISIS – that part is obvious. But are we ready and willing to implement an overall strategy – to do something? If so, whatever our strategy, it must include caring for those who fight the battles once the war is over, for the President is right about the injuries and loss of life our troops will experience.

Likewise, we need a plan to take care of the “sacrifices” made by those who have already served. From the Vietnam War forward, over 6.5 million men and women have been deployed to combat theaters. If projections are accurate that a minimum of 20% (current projections regarding Vietnam are at 30%) of these will experience PTSD or Moral Injury, more than 1.5 million veterans and their families are in need of assistance. Any new conflict will only raise these numbers.

If we are ready to send our troops to war, are we ready to ensure they receive the care they need when they return? That is an important part of the debate that can no longer be ignored – it must be addressed. Our veterans deserve no less.



[Ed. Note: To learn more about actions needed to address PTSD and Moral Injury read the accompanying article *Shock and Awe: A Response to Combat Trauma* by Eugene Cuevas]

Shock and Awe: A Response to Combat Trauma

by Eugene Cuevas

Back in 2003 news coverage of the invasion of Iraq introduced us to the term “shock and awe” as a “term for a military strategy based on achieving rapid dominance over an adversary by the initial imposition of overwhelming force and firepower” (*Oxford Reference* “shock and awe”). I remember watching through the safe portal of my television screen as the incredible proficiency and sheer dominance of American military forces rolled through Saddam’s army. I admit a certain amount of visceral glee characterized my response, much like the excitement I felt as a kid watching Rambo devastate his enemies in a Vietnamese prison camp. As a civilian, this is how I saw those brave warriors taking the fight to the enemy. I imagined the terror and cacophony of impact they would deliver. Like most who watched, what I missed was the impact war leaves on even the victor.

Ten years later, I found myself working



on a documentary film about PTSD, called *Invisible Scars: Hope for Warriors with Hidden Wounds*. As we began interviewing veterans for the first installment of the *Invisible Scars* project, I began to grasp the emotional shock and mental awe war leaves on all warriors. Now, as we press through the post-production phase of installment #2, *Honoring the Code: Warriors and Moral Injury*, I view the potential de-

ployment of more soldiers into the battlefield with a more sobered perspective. I’ve also learned that most warriors don’t have personal political agendas but have adopted what General “Jerry” Boykin calls “a transcendent cause,” that drives them toward more idealistic goals and commitments most of us have never considered. And as more soldiers return from the battle and others sit by anxiously awaiting the call, we as a community must prepare for what will follow.

Military commanders consider certain costs of war as they draft battle plans and execute orders. World War II veteran Horace Lee said in his interview with us that when he heard the bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, he and his fellow Marines were overjoyed, not because they hated the Japanese as a people, not because they desired to see so many lives lost, but because they understood the value of life. His unit had been briefed on their next mission, a larger assault than what he’d already been a part of at Iwo Jima. The expectation was that

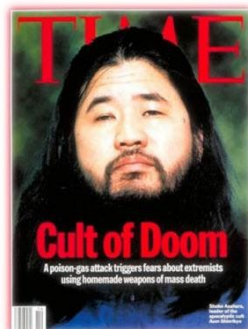
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Culture Tracks

RELIGIOUS TERRORISTS—NOT JUST RADICAL ISLAMISTS

While religious terrorist groups associated with Islam get most of the attention, terrorism has certainly been enacted by others, including groups associated with religions other than Islam. Here are a few notable examples that drew attention when they occurred.

Aum Shinrikyo (Alep): Rooted in Buddhism with elements of Hinduism and Christianity. Group formed in Japan in the 1980s by Shoko Asahara. In 1992, Asahara declared himself the Christ. He began to develop a “doomsday” theology predicting that Armageddon would come as a result of the United States starting a third World War. Interestingly, they determined to help matters along through acts of terrorism. In March of 1995 members of the group carried out five simultaneous attacks on the Tokyo subway system by releasing poisonous sarin gas on commuter trains. Thirteen were killed with over one thousand more injured. This was the first large scale terrorist chemical attack.



Catholics and Protestants in Ireland: Apart from those related to Islam, perhaps some of the most well-known acts of terrorism related to religion are those that occurred in the struggle for Ireland and boiled down to a conflict between Catholics and Protestants. Between the years of 1969-2001 over 3,500 lives were lost. Many due to acts that could only be described as terrorism.

Anders Breivik: In an interesting twist, this Norwegian terrorist carried out a series of attacks that he said were intended to prevent Muslims from taking over Norway and Western Europe. Though not a religious person, Breivik was a member of the Church of Norway. In July of 2011 he killed 77 people (many of whom were teens

at a youth camp). He surrendered to authorities and was sentenced to twenty-one years in prison, the maximum allowed in Norway.

Rajneeshee: Offshoot of Hinduism. Founded by Bhagwan Shreee Rajneesh and located in Oregon. The group had taken control of Antelope, OR, by electing their members to political office. In 1984 they planned to also take over the county. To ensure they outnumbered other voters they planned to introduce salmonella poisoning among the populace, keeping them from voting. The method of delivery was to spray salmonella on the vegetables and dressing at salad bars. A trial run produced 751 case of salmonella poisoning. It also attracted the attention of the Centers for Disease Control and other government authorities who discovered their larger plot.

Army of God: This group associates itself with Christianity and has been labeled an underground network of terrorists who use violence to fight abortion. During the 1980s they claimed responsibility for the bombing of seven abortion clinics in Washington DC, Maryland, and Virginia. Perhaps the most famous/well-known person associated with them is Eric Rudolph, who was responsible for the Centennial Olympic Park bombing in Atlanta during the 1996 Summer Olympics. One person was killed and 111 injured. He is also responsible for the 1997 bombing of a Birmingham, AL abortion clinic in which a security guard was killed. Rudolph was arrested in May of 2003 and was sentenced to four life sentences.

Buford Furrow: Affiliated with white supremacists as part of the Aryan Nation, a separatist group associated with the Christian Identity Movement. In August of 1999, Furrow entered a Jewish Community Center in Los Angeles with the expressed purpose of killing Jews. Once inside he began firing and injured five people, including three children. Fleeing the building he later came upon a Filipino-American postal worker who he killed because of his dark skin. Furrow later surrendered to authorities and remains incarcerated.

so many more lives, both American and Japanese, would be lost. Another type of “shock and awe” was the only hope in sight. Now, seventy years later, Mr. Lee says he still recalls the horrors of combat and the sight of devastation he witnessed. He says he battles those memories at night, and he “has to ask the Lord to help [him] flip the page over and get off the memories.” Even with two purple hearts awarded him, the emotional wounds were the more distressing.

We must prepare for the invisible wounds of war. Many warriors that survive the battle may return with physical injuries, but even more will face the shock of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the awe of Moral Injury. Horace Lee’s generation may have referred to these phenomena as “soldier’s heart” or “shell shock,” but both history and science have studied war and psychology to give us sharper, modern insights on these conditions that are actually as old as humanity itself. In 1980 “PTSD” became the formal, medical term to classify the mental and emotional anguish many warriors suffer post-war; however, in 2009 further understanding and divisions of trauma introduced us to the term “moral injury” as a distinction for particular post-war suffering.

PTSD can be best understood as an emotional and mental response to a specific traumatic incident, characterized by fear, whether fearing for one’s own life or others around you. Moral Injury, on the other hand, classifies a soul-searching inspection of one’s own involvement in the trauma. For many veterans, the fearful dangers of the battle may not haunt them as much as the choices they had to make or the things they witnessed in the warzone

While political leaders debate and commanders strategize, the rest of America has responsibility we must also consider. Through over sixty interviews for two documentary films, a series of calls-to-action has emerged, prompting all of us with certain accountability. That responsibility can be broken into four basic levels:

- Federal
- Social
- Educational
- Spiritual

At the Federal-level, we must take responsibility for the full care and treatment of veterans, providing adequate supply and access to the medical attention they may need not only for the physical wounds of war, but for the invisible scars as well. This means re-enforcing VA hospitals with staff and training to serve the numbers of wounded in addition to expanding satellite clinics to reach veterans in rural communities far flung from the access to major-city hospitals. There must also be an option for new avenues of treatment outside those traditional VA programs.

But we cannot rest on assuming hospitals and government programs will meet all needs. Even if fully supplied the shock waves of invisible wounds extend further than political and medical reach and therefore into our local duties. At the Social-level we must consider the needs of veterans re-integrating into civilian life. The big boom of post-war 1945 was that a growing economy presented great job opportunities for veterans to find a new place in society and apply themselves to a productive livelihood. The recent downturn of our economy leaves many veterans without such opportunity. Both businesses and educational institutions must think creatively to develop job opportunities for veterans. An example of this kind of forward thinking is found in Samford University’s new veteran, nursing program, which takes those who have some medical experience in warzones and helps them develop as licensed nurses. This kind of social action will help those veterans make healthy adaptation of their skills and transition into productive civilian roles.

At an Educational-level, we must develop public education that helps communities understand the military experience and the challenges faced. This is where the documentary series from Crosswinds Foundation and Front Porch Media excels. One of the key applications of our first film has been as a

tool, helping veterans explain to their families what they’ve been through. The better we understand the hidden impact of war and are able to communicate that to others, the greater the hope for healing.

At the Spiritual-level we find our greatest calling. The only power abundant enough to fully overcome the shock of moral injuries is the awe of saving grace. As believers in Christ, we have been commissioned to deliver the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. In His salvation we find forgiveness and grace that cover all guilt and shame.

If we hope to combat the swelling numbers of military suicide, we must fully accept our responsibility to spread the gospel and make disciples. This means we must embrace and serve veterans, understanding the unique brokenness and challenges they face. We must equip other veterans to minister to fellow soldiers. We must see military families, especially the veterans themselves, not just as heroes to be thanked on two holidays a year, but as invaluable parts of our community, worthy of inclusion, mercy, and purpose. For it is in the mighty work of the Church that veterans can find a new mission that becomes the ultimate transcendent cause.

The simplest response is to thank a veteran for his/her service; however, as Dr. Rita Nakashima Brock explained to us, many veterans find such platitudes empty. The greater response is to consider where we each have influence at one or more of these levels. Let’s put our gratefulness into notable action. Let every veteran be shocked by the quality of our care. Let them be awed by love of our Savior.



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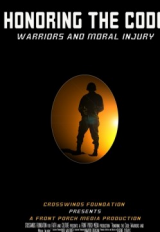
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Share your thoughts/opinions on this and other topics of concern in today’s culture. Even if it’s the same as ours we appreciate knowing what you think. Email: info@crosswindsfoundation.org



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