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## US Military Adventurism: The Definition of Insanity

By Thomas Knapp  
October 23, 2015

On October 22, US Army Master Sergeant Joshua L. Wheeler died near Hawija, in northern Iraq, while taking part in a mission aimed at rescuing prisoners from Islamic State forces. Wheeler is the first American soldier – or at least the first one we’ve been told about – to die in combat in Iraq since 2011.

I’m not an expert on US foreign policy in the Middle East, but I have long taken an interest in the subject, especially since Thanksgiving weekend of 1990, when I mobilized with my Marine Corps reserve unit and headed for Saudi Arabia to participate in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm (that kind of thing tends to powerfully focus one’s attention). Over the intervening quarter century, I’ve reached one conclusion:

US intervention in the Middle East always makes things worse.

Sometimes more obviously and quickly, sometimes more subtly and slowly, but always.

Worse for the people there, and worse for Americans too.

The US overthrew Iran’s elected government in 1953, replacing it with the Shah’s authoritarian regime. It took 25 years for that poison fruit to ripen into revolution, a hostage situation, and an anti-American theocracy.

The US supported Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in his eight-year war against Iran. Two years after that war ended, the US found itself kicking Saddam's army out of Kuwait and establishing a permanent military presence on soil which Osama bin Laden deemed off-limits to infidels. You probably remember how that turned out.

The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 empowered Iran's theocrats and various Sunni Islamist groups. The country remains a shambles more than a decade after that empty "victory."

For nearly 40 years, since the Camp David accords, the US has paid through the nose to keep a lid on the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs. Consequently, the incentive is for both sides (as well as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, who also get payoffs) to keep the conflict at a permanent simmer and occasionally let it boil over instead of settling it. If the conflict ends, so do the US aid checks.

As the old Alcoholics Anonymous saying goes, insanity is repeating the same mistakes and expecting different results. And the first step in recovery is admitting you have a problem.

Let the Middle East solve its own problems. Let Master Sergeant Wheeler be the last American to die for this seemingly endless series of mistakes.