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Our Afghan War is Crazy

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When the so-called “Bin Laden Hunter,” Gary Faulkner was arrested in Pakistan and returned to the United States last week, the media had fun lampooning the Colorado resident with his heart set on taking out Al-Qaeda’s top man. But Faulkner’s foreign policy is far more sensible than anything Washington continues to promote, and if forced to choose between the colorful construction worker and Obama—it is the president who is acting crazy.

When the United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001, its alleged mission was not unlike Faulkner’s—to exact retribution against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban for 911, including capturing or killing terror mastermind Osama Bin Laden. For most Americans, and indeed most of the world, the reasons for going into Afghanistan made sense.

Today, that war doesn’t make any sense. While there might have been near unanimous support for a kick-ass-and-come-home approach in 2001, almost nine years later, good reasons as to why we are still in Afghanistan are in short supply. Are we there to fight Al-Qaeda? According to Gen. David Petraeus, Al-Qaeda is no longer in Afghanistan, a point reiterated last week by CIA Director Leon Panetta. Are we in Afghanistan to fight the Taliban? According to the Los Angeles Times in March, “The Afghan Taliban does not want to be seen as, or heard of, having the same relationship with AQ that they had in the past,” said (a) senior official, who is familiar with the latest intelligence and used an abbreviation for Al Qaeda. Indications of Al Qaeda-Taliban strains are at odds with

recent public statements by the Obama administration, which has stressed close connections among militant groups...”

Last week, after he announced the replacement of Gen. Stanley McChrystal with Petraeus, President Obama was asked by a reporter as he exited the Rose Garden, “Mr. President, can this war be won?” Of course, with a very serious war on his hands the president had no time for such an elementary inquiry. Neither does he have time or patience for, what he called on Sunday “a lot of obsession” about ending the war in Afghanistan, as he keeps getting nagged by the press and the entire world about when the US might finally withdraw some 100,000 troops from that nation.

Though the main focus of the controversial Rolling Stone article on McChrystal was the tension and disconnect between the now former Afghanistan commander and the Obama administration, the article was primarily about the utter futility of the war. Author Michael Hastings wrote “Even those who support McChrystal and his strategy of counterinsurgency know that whatever the general manages to accomplish in Afghanistan, it’s going to look more like Vietnam than Desert Storm. ‘It’s not going to look like a win, smell like a win or taste like a win’ says Maj. Gen. Bill Mayville, who serves as chief of operations for McChrystal. ‘This is going to end in an argument.’” Retired Col. Douglas MacGregor, an architect of Operation Desert Storm, was even more blunt about our prospects in Afghanistan, telling FOX News host Judge Andrew Napolitano, that our presence is a “hopeless endeavor” and a “bottomless pit.”

Today, it is almost considered impolite to bring up our original reason for going into Afghanistan, and such bothersome questions have obviously become annoying to the president. Yet, what is crazier—a man still so enraged by 911 that he insists on going after the top Al-Qaeda terrorist all by himself, or a government that has largely forgotten about Bin Laden and is far removed from its original, stated mission, yet still keeps fighting? Faulkner had a definite and clear cut goal that directly targeted our primary enemy. Our government’s commitment remains unclear and indefinite, yet it bizarrely still claims to be focused on enemies our top leaders admit are no longer in Afghanistan. If it is true that Faulkner embarked on a highly improbable mission, it is even more true that America foolishly continues on its mission impossible.

Our foreign policy is more like a foreign permanency, something columnist George Will breaks down well, “Those Americans who say Afghanistan is a test of America’s ‘staying power’ are saying we must stay there because we are there. This is steady work, but treats perseverance as a virtue regardless of context or consequences, and makes futility into a reason for persevering.”

If there was ever a good reason for going into Afghanistan, we can be certain our leaders have forgotten it at this point, and it’s amusing to see so many now laughing at the one man who insists on remembering—even if to a ridiculous fault. On June 13, Pakistan officials found Faulkner in the woods of northern Pakistan with a pistol, a sword and night vision equipment, trying to help fight the war on terror. The saddest part is that this isn’t even true, as although we are certainly at war and Islamic terrorists still exist—what

one has to do with preventing the other is something this president and his officials still can't make clear. And Faulkner's approach might have been crazy but this government's approach is damn near criminal—as we continue fighting the longest war in American history for no apparent reason at all.