



DERELICTION OF DUTY?

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Retired Gen. Ricardo Sanchez's recent public remarks elucidating "the nightmare with no end in sight" is a far too convenient truth for him and those who wish to tactically pin the donkey's tail on the administration.

While in command of all ground forces in Iraq in 2003 and 2004, Sanchez and others in Baghdad and Washington gave us ominous forebodings of the types of failure that loomed ahead.

As officers leading troops on the ground, we recall a memorandum from him in December 2003 stating the need for coalition forces to treat Iraqis with dignity and respect.

A scant four months later, the scandalous mistreatment of detainees at Abu Ghraib was exposed in entirety. A handful of enlisted soldiers were held as the chief culprits. But what part did Sanchez play in that during his watch in command?

And what about the more serious matters of poor leadership and mismanagement during his tenure in charge? Those of us operating at the tactical and operational levels perpetually conveyed the need for more troops, equipment and support, which consistently went unanswered by the leaders in Baghdad.

What part do they have in the sectarian division, corruption and insurgency that steadily grew after the invasion phase of the war?

Why are we in such haste to pay credence to leaders who so directly contributed to our present woe?

It remains the private grief of countless soldiers that accountability hasn't materialized. To the contrary, Medals of Freedom and lucrative book deals continue to be lavished upon the perpetrators of our current state of affairs. Because of this, we remain shrouded in the cerements of our discontent.

The politicization of statements made by those who once possessed stature continues to undermine our real objectives and lacerates many who have given so much to their country — particularly those who have served in uniform.

“Men become the symbols of ideas,” Thomas Jefferson once wrote. Ricardo Sanchez, among a number of others, has symbolized dereliction of duty, incredible incompetence and arrogant obstinance. He and others are unworthy of our national esteem.

The refulgent truth of the dereliction of our fathers shall assuredly come in due time. Until that well-overdue moment of reckoning, let us not revel in the apocryphal competence that men like Sanchez wish to now propagate.

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