
From: H
Sent: 10/31/2009 12:59:26 PM +00:00
To: Huma Abedin <Huma@clintonemail.com>
Subject: Re: WJC wanted you to see this article

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From: Justin Cooper
To: H; Huma Abedin <AbedinH@state.gov>
Sent: Tue Oct 27 08:33:24 2009
Subject: WJC wanted you to see this article

October 25, 2009

The Army You Have

By DEXTER FILKINS <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/f/dexter_filkins/index.html?inline=nyt-per>

In the months before the war in Iraq began in March 2003, many American soldiers took part in huge mock tank battles against a mythical army known as the "Kraznovians." The Kraznovians were modeled after the Soviet Army <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/a/us_army/index.html?inline=nyt-org>, which had evaporated more than a decade before, but the battles that unfolded at the National Training Center in the California desert were designed to resemble those that had been anticipated on the plains of Central Europe. Then the real war in Iraq began, and the American Army found itself disastrously unprepared for the conflict that unfolded.

It took a long time — Iraq imploded, and 32,000 Americans were killed or wounded — but the Army finally righted itself. The temporary buildup known as the surge may have helped stabilize the country, but what really pulled Iraq back from the abyss

was that the Army fighting in the later years was vastly different from the one that went in at the start. The Army transformed itself in Iraq, and not a moment too soon.

The story of that transformation, and of the generals at the heart of it, is the subject of "The Fourth Star" by David Cloud, a correspondent at The New York Times from 2005 to 2007, and Greg Jaffe, the Pentagon correspondent for The Washington Post. (Cloud and I met once while he worked at The Times, and we contributed to two articles together and shared a byline on a third.) This book is about four generals — David Petraeus <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/p/david_h_petraeus/index.html?inline=nyt-per> and Peter Chiarelli, who led the transformation, and George W. Casey Jr. and John Abizaid, who were ultimately left behind by it. As "The Fourth Star" makes clear, it was only the efforts of Generals Petraeus and Chiarelli, and other like-minded officers, that saved America from a cataclysm in the Middle East.

"The Fourth Star" paints wonderfully dramatic portraits of the four senior officers highlighted here, but at its heart it's a story about bureaucracy. As an institution, the United States Army <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/a/us_army/index.html?inline=nyt-org> has much more in common with, say, a giant corporation like General Motors <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/companies/general_motors_corporation/index.html?inline=nyt-org> than with a professional sports team like the New York Giants. You can't cut players who don't perform, and it's hard to fire your head coach. Like General Motors, the Army changes very slowly, and once it does, it's hard to turn it around again.

The book begins with Vietnam. The Army was defeated in a guerrilla war there that upended many of the core principles on which it had lived and thrived. Yet its response to the Vietnam debacle was not to rethink those principles, but to erase the bad memories and pretend that the war had never happened. Instead of planning how to fight the next insurgency, the Army went right back to preparing for what it loved to do: fight big battles against big, uniformed armies just like itself. Training in guerrilla war, as Cloud and Jaffe show, was banished from the Army's curriculum.

Abizaid, Casey, Chiarelli and Petraeus all began their Army careers in the 1970s, when the Army was at its post-Vietnam nadir — when drug abuse was so rampant and morale so low that it was said the military was incapable of actually fighting. All four men were exceptionally bright and hard-working, rising through the ranks as the Army struggled to rebuild itself.

"The Fourth Star" is at its best in sketching the lives and personalities of these young officers. John Abizaid, the great-grandson of Lebanese immigrants, learned Arabic and figured out early in his career that the Army would need to think deeply about the political and economic components of the wars it would probably have to fight. George Casey, the son of a two-star general killed in Vietnam, was determined to ensure that the experience of that war would not be repeated. Peter Chiarelli, perhaps the most down-to-earth general in the Army, started his career teaching social science and never abandoned his thoughtful approach to soldiering.

But the hero of "The Fourth Star," as of the Army itself, is David Petraeus, the brightest and most driven of all the bright and driven men around him. Petraeus comes off here as almost fanatically ambitious. From the day he walked into West Point <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/u/united_states_military_academy/index.html?inline=nyt-org> as a young cadet in 1970, he was determined to best his comrades in any competition, no matter how small. No detail escaped him: Petraeus told his men what types of haircuts to get and the way they should button their tunics. He irritated many of his fellow officers on his way up, but his drive was matched by brains and ability. Among other things, he completed a Ph.D. at Princeton University <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/p/princeton_university/index.html?inline=nyt-org> ; his thesis, not coincidentally, was entitled "The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam."

The four men came together in the crucible of Iraq. Abizaid, as commander of all military forces in the region, and Casey, as the leader of American forces inside the country, figure together here as the men who presided over the war's nightmare years. Chiarelli and Petraeus served in Iraq during this period, too, first as division commanders and then in more senior posts. Both men realized very quickly that the Army's heavy-handed approach to fighting was driving the Iraqis away.

Abizaid and Casey, for all their talents, conceived and directed the strategy in Iraq that brought America to the brink of defeat. The essence of that strategy was to train Iraqi forces as quickly as possible so that American soldiers could come home. In practice, that meant pulling American troops from the streets and replacing them with Iraqi soldiers who were unwilling or incapable of fighting for their government. The result was anarchy and civil war.

This disastrous policy was reversed by the "surge," dreamed up by a group of outsiders and ordered by President Bush in early 2007. Casey was promoted and brought back to Washington, Abizaid retired, and Petraeus took charge. (Chiarelli also went home, to become vice chief of staff of the Army, after serving an unhappy tenure as Casey's deputy.) At its heart, the surge was not merely about putting more troops into Baghdad but about deploying them in Iraqi neighborhoods to protect the civilian population and thereby isolate the insurgents — the essence of counterinsurgency strategy. In the surge, Petraeus finally got a chance to put his ideas into practice on a broad scale. Within 12 months, violence in Iraq had dropped dramatically.

"The Fourth Star" is a very good book, readable, detailed and rich. The profiles of Abizaid, Casey, Chiarelli and Petraeus are nuanced and well drawn; the generals really come to life, as does the Army itself.

But I wish the authors had gone further analytically. What is missing from "The Fourth Star" is a sense of the magnitude of the Iraqi disaster — not merely what the generals inherited, but also what they, especially Abizaid and Casey, wrought. The Iraqi strategy conceived by Abizaid and Casey — and endorsed, it should be said, by Donald Rumsfeld <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/r/donald_h_rumsfeld/index.html?inline=nyt-per> and most others in the Bush administration — led directly to the catastrophe that Iraq became. Despite clear and overwhelming evidence of the disaster, Abizaid and Casey pushed on, assuring the public that their strategy was working. Even a glance into the Iraqi streets proved otherwise. Sometimes "The Fourth Star" is a little too nice — sometimes you have to tell a general he's wrong. Petraeus and Chiarelli would be the first to say so.

Dexter Filkins, a foreign correspondent for The Times, is the author of "The Forever War."

Message Headers:

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From: H <HDR22@clintonemail.com>
To: Huma Abedin <Huma@clintonemail.com>
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