

The Courage to Leave

Excerpts from "The Courage To Leave," by Bob Herbert, the New York Times (6/12/10)



Sarah Walton hugs the tombstone of her husband, Lt. Col. James Walton, at Arlington National Cemetery after placing a Christmas wreath at his graveside Dec.12, 2009. James was killed in Afghanistan. (Photo: Getty Images)

There is no good news coming out of the depressing and endless war in Afghanistan.

We just funnel the stressed and underpaid troops in and out of the combat zones, while all the while showering taxpayer billions on the contractors and giant corporations that view the horrors of war as a heaven-sent bonanza.

Americans have zoned out on this war. They don't even want to think about it. **They don't want their taxes raised to pay for it, even as they say in poll after poll that they are worried about budget deficits.** The vast majority do not want their sons or daughters anywhere near Afghanistan.

Why in the world should the small percentage of the population that has volunteered for military service shoulder the entire burden of this hapless, endless effort? The truth is that top American officials do not believe the war can be won but **do not know how to end it.**

Our government leaders keep mouthing platitudes about objectives that are not achievable, which is a form of deception.

Ultimately, the public is at fault for this catastrophe in Afghanistan, where more than 1,000 G.I.'s have now lost their lives. If we don't have the courage as a people to fight and share in the sacrifices when our nation is at war, if we're unwilling to seriously think about the war and hold our leaders accountable for the way it is conducted, if we're not even willing to pay for it, then we should at least have the courage to pull our valiant forces out of it.



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