

# HAWKA-A-A-A-A-A-A-A-A!

*The never-ending end game is now in sight, while the abysmal ground war in Afghanistan is winding down. Now enter the murky world of Blackhawk where the extreme fight against all extremists is gonna make Dirty Harry look like a school-yard Mommy.*

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Maybe there is, finally, light at the end of the abyss known as Afghanistan.

Wars are games – broad, global political games that good and bad people play, almost constantly. In Afghanistan, air strikes with UAVs are effective, yes; but not enough by themselves. Soldiers of regular armies are constantly harassed and killed by unseen insurgents. The Afghan population is a pawn in the deadly game while also harboring potential enemies. Trust comes at a price. Slowly but surely allied governments are now recognizing that agonizing defeat is inevitable in Afghanistan unless there is a change in strategy on the ground. And the **Public Beast is getting restless, uneasy and angry in Afghanistan**, and elsewhere....

Enter Blackhawk, the not-so-secret world of targeted killing.

After reading a recent NY Times piece about **relentless, targeted hunting of Taliban leaders**, it reinforced my long-held perspective about the best method of fighting extremism: in that it bears a distinct similarity to a comic book that was popular, globally, over fifty years ago. I speak of **Blackhawk** which consisted of an American-lead, multi-ethnic band of killers, highly trained, well-resourced, fiercely determined, heavily armed and just as fanatical about their missions as were the terrorist-type enemy they constantly hunted all over the world.

*Déjà vu*, I thought. And a reminder of the boys' games I played with mates in backyards, on beaches, in forests and so on, from as early as I can remember: that is, from the mid 1940s to the late 1950s when that comic book was at its zenith. Even then, I can recall nodding with the logic of fighting terror with terror, when an enemy is so fanatical as to be beyond redemption. Most of all, the memory of that ferocious battle-cry of the Blackhawk band still resonates, bringing death, disruption and destruction to the enemies of democracy and freedom. *Yea – way to go!*

Boyhood dreams and war games are now electronic; so also real war games by real soldiers. Nothing much changes. Therefore, considering the now-recognized fact that Afghanistan should not have been ground-invaded in the first place – the intensive bombing in 2001/2002 forced al-Qaeda and most of the fanatical Taliban into western Pakistan, locked away and contained, initially – it's a constant wonder to me that American and allied military strategists apparently failed to consider adopting the Blackhawk mantle from the get-go. Or, maybe they did, but weren't *quite* prepared?

Because, even though the ball was dropped, there were hints of it, over the years. Occasionally, The Washington Post, The New York Times and others would run a

story about secret raids by Special Forces, Delta Forces, and now most recently, Task Force 373 (I wonder if that's a twisted allusion to an old cop movie called *Badge 373*, where Robert Duvall was really making 'em die hard, and Bruce Willis was still young enough to be slurping milkshakes?). America, after all, just loves symbolism; and not *only* America. But being the most powerful military machine in the world means it can blow a damn country *clean off* the face of the earth! So, Mr Taliban, you gotta ask yourself a question....

Whatever the case, and with a nod to General McChrystal, it's a dirty business but it's also the best strategy to bring resolution – one way or another – to the “open ulcer” of Afghanistan, or any other “ulcer” in the world.

Moreover, reflecting further on American history, it's even more puzzling that American strategists took *sooooo* long to ratchet up Blackhawk bands for Afghanistan. Consider, if you will, the pacification of the American west in the nineteenth century: first, it was invaded by hunters, traders, trappers, outlaws, gold-diggers of various kinds, and with settlers bringing up the rear. Naturally, the local population – the native Americans – resisted, thus forcing D.C. politicians to institute a concerted, but graduated, response of large forces of ground troops; a series of forts, moving west, erected to protect settler “ink blots” – to use the modern parlance vis-à-vis Afghanistan; and a relentless process of hunting down, corralling, and occasionally exterminating those who would not surrender. At one time, there were over three hundred forts across USA, all assisting the development of the whole country into a powerhouse of production. Because, as some nineteenth century visionaries knew: the New American Century beckoned.

Through those early Indian wars, in the Civil War, against Quantrill's Raiders, on to the gut-wrenching Philippines insurgency at the turn of century, the World Wars, then Korea, next Vietnam, and even against drug cartels in South America and Mexico, America has a long, *long* history of guerrilla warfare and fighting insurgencies.

Today, one could well compare the entrenched presence of American forces in many countries around the world as simply a modern version of its nineteenth century practice, modified, of course, to suit the geopolitics of whatever region the current battle is being waged. You can easily find lists of U.S. bases on the Internet; try Wikipedia, for starters, with links to many more. Whatever the total number of bases dotted around, globally, the USA is – no pun intended – well positioned to promote and protect its business interests anywhere; *and* to respond to international extremism.

The key word there is ‘international’. Most people understand that no country is free from the scourge of extremism. So, despite public announcements from some countries – including the USA – about withdrawing from Afghanistan, it doesn't take much intelligence to figure out that Task Force 373, and others to come, will form the basis for the ongoing battle against global extremism, wherever and whenever needed. **Regular armies, however, will gradually withdraw** as a sop to public opinion and to save political face, while the Afghan forces expand and take more control over the numerous ‘ink blots’ of reasonably safe areas throughout that country.

Thus leaving Special Forces from numerous allies, with Task Force 373 (or whatever its final name) as spearhead, to carry on covert operations against all extremists: Fight terror with even *more* terrifying, targeted terror.

That is the war the U.S.A. and its allies must fight, because it's the only way to have any chance of being reasonably safe. And, like Ripley said just before her desperate band took out **the Aliens**, once and for all: "**It's the only way to be sure.**"

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