

Who's really winning the war on terrorism?

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Richard Minter, in Shadow War: the untold story of how Bush is winning the war on terror (Regnery)

WHY do the insiders -- the National Security Council, the CIA, the FBI, other intelligence services and the Defence Department -- think the war on terror is going well, while the press and public wonder darkly if the terrorists are winning?

A few American officials [whom I've interviewed] are complacent and confident. Many more, while still being anxious about al-Qa'ida's next deadly surprise, see a record of hard-won successes. These victories are real and measurable (the terrorists are either in custody or dead). This seems to confirm their belief that America is slowly winning.

And, most of the time, these achievements are no secret. The Taliban, who provided a safe harbour for Osama bin Laden, are vanquished. Saddam Hussein, whose regime provided arms training and money to bin Laden, no longer rules Iraq. The head of Pakistan's nuclear arms program, A.Q.Khan has apparently ceased helping nations and terrorists gain weapons of mass destruction. Libya, which murdered scores of Americans aboard Pan Am Flight 103 and funded terror groups that joined bin Laden, has renounced terrorism and atomic weapons.

Yet the press, the people's intelligence service, has not focused on these victories. It focused on the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal, the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the validity of intelligence about Iraqi efforts to buy uranium from Niger.

If the press had covered World War II the way they cover the war on terror, we would have seen exhaustive coverage of the carnage of the Pearl Harbor attack but missed the Doolittle's raid on Tokyo, the heroic defeat on Wake Island, the desperate defence of Guadalcanal. With a press like this, at the end of 1942 America would have no idea whether World War II was a hopeless cataclysm or a purposeful march to victory.

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