Revisiting Tet: A Chance to Do It Right

Description

Lots of discussion on President Bush acknowledging that the situation today in Iraq could have a resemblance to a battle fought almost 29 years in the past. Almost a year ago, I blogged about echos of the 1968 Tet Offensive in the current conflict.

Executive Summary of Tet:

The Tet Offensive was conducted during an agreed upon truce between the beligerants in the conflict.

The NVA used the Viet Cong as an â€œablative shield.â€• This worked to clear out the â€œtaintedâ€• South Vietnamese fighters by sacrificing them â€œfor the cause.â€•

default watermark

Despite a few VC getting into the US Embassy compound, they were all killed in the yard, and did not get into the building.

The US and international press presented the Tet Offensive as a success for the forces opposing the Government of South Vietnam.

The press was wrong in a military sense, but were correct in the historical context, yet they had no clue at the time how correct they were.

The NVA understood the power of the press had â€œcrossed overâ€• and had become more of an effective weapon that raw military might, which led to the strategic move.

â€”
Commentary for today:

Yes, it is similar to today in the sense that the enemy understands:

- 1) How we have abandoned, as a culture, any significant effort to keep ourselves informed beyond the headline of any article, or cover statement of current news magazines;
- 2) Anything the tradtional media states must be true and;
- 3) The public contains significant numbers of skeptical people who believe the US Government is behind all the conflict for the purpose of lining their pockets, or those of their friends in industry;
- 4) Regardless of how devastating such an effort is in the short run in terms of physical resources or manpower it is to them, it has the potential to cause us to turn our gaze away and vote for the appeasers, just as was done in Spain.

Differences:

- 1) We have historical perspective, as a result of the long term effect of the 1968 events to view this period in history;

- 2) The war then was defined by soverign nations and international boundries, fueled by an idealology, this time itâ€™s a war defined by one side with national boundries, and an opponent that knows no territorial constraints, yet it still filled by an idealology;
- 3) If the insurgents do make a â€œfinal sprintâ€• in the hopes of biasing the outcome of the November 7th elections, they will be in poor logistical shape to follow up on any attacks, therefore we need to be ready to step up and squash them when they are at a low point militarily and;
- 4) Our political leaders can use this analogy to their advantage, while the press will try to use it to the nationâ€™s disadvantage.

In the aftermath of the Tet Offensive, and even the Vietnam War, both sides of the equation, the Coalition and the insurgent forces, can take lessons learned away from the Tet Offensive. It is not a perfectly modeled analogy, but it has similarities. It would serve the press well to do some more detailed study of the actual battles across South Vietnam. It would serve the military, and our political leadership well to study the battles across South Vietnam.

If the military has read the tea leaves correctly, they will have stockpiled supplies, pre-postioned troops and tactical/strategic reserves, and have shored up the defenses. In addition, focused analysis of intelligence, to help tactically prepare for the next 3 1/2 weeks. Once the battle has joined, then it will be time to crush the exposed enemy forces, then be prepared to follow them, physically or via collected intel, back to their safe houses to continue the fight, with one intention to eliminate every possible combatant, then, they will have correctly interpreted the lessons of February 1968.

default watermark

The press should spend some time studying history, beyond what some old timer in the press room tells them. Iâ€™m sure George Stephanopoulos doesnâ€™t comprehend the bigger implications this all has within the story from a war long ago, which I discussed above. If he somehow thinks the current levels of violence, like Tet will cause us to â€œcut and run,â€• he has to understand the US military didn not â€œcut and runâ€• from that battle, in fact, they stood tall and obliterated the VC in massive numbers. We are doing the same thing today. If anyone cut and ran, it was the Democratically controlled Congress, that withdrew funds from the Vietnamization effort and the US military for non-Army support for the ARVN forces.

Our leadership needs to prepare us for a potential â€œOctober Surpriseâ€• from the enemy in the form of massive, coordinated, widespread and well documented attacks, and also the knowledge that our military is prepared to take it to the enemy and put the dampers on civial war, insurrection and other violence behind us and the people or Iraq. If anything, President Bush should highlight that it was the Democrats who lost their nerve in the face of the enemy, but only after a Republican took office. They certainly supported the war (and the dreaded â€œmilitary-industrial complexâ€•) while Kennedy and Johnson were in office. If any lessons should be taken away from Tet, it is that one in the last sentance.

As a final statement, even General Giap acknowledged to a US officer, many years later, that the NVA/VC never won on the battlefield of Vietnam, but he also stated, wisely and accurately, that fact was also completely irrelevant.

Trackbacked at: Mudville Gazette, Samantha Burns, Blue Star Chronicles, Stuck on Stupid, TMH Bacon Bits, Linkfest Haven, third world country, Castle ARGGHHH!

Category

1. Geo-Political

2. History
3. Military
4. Political

Date Created
October 19, 2006
Author
admin

default watermark