

Tactics of Terror

Terrorists in Iraq who behead foreigners follow an example set by Muhammad.

When I was a teenager in Egypt I witnessed a beheading. On a street one day, a man ran out of a store with a butcher's knife and literally cut off the head of a teenage girl with one swing. Her crime was holding a boy's hand in public. The killer was her brother.

That attack went beyond the teachings of Islamic law. However, the terrorists in Iraq who are beheading foreigners as part of the resistance against an enemy are truly following the example set by Muhammad. They are following Islamic law exactly, killing only non-Muslims while giving Muslims three days to "repent" and then be released (which I personally believe occurred with the three men from Turkey and the U.S. Marine who was a Lebanese Muslim).

The mastermind behind many attacks is the Jordanian terrorist known as Al-Zarqawi, who beheaded Jewish-American citizen Nick Berg on videotape and also directed the beheading of South Korean worker Kim Sun-il. Al-Zarqawi is a modern-day version of a personality from Islamic history named Bin Maslama.

Muhammad had asked for a volunteer to kill a Jewish man who was opposing him, and Bin Maslama stepped forward. Bin Maslama and some friends went to the man's house one evening and invited him for a walk.

While they walked, Bin Maslama complimented the man on his

perfume and asked, "May I hold your head so that I may smell it better?" As he did so, his companions cut off the man's head. They then took it to Muhammad (sources: Bukahri, English translation, vol. 4, book 52, no. 271; Muslim, English translation, book 19, no. 4436; Kathir, Ibn. The Beginning and the End, vol. 2, part 4, p. 8. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar-Ehyet al-Turas Al Arabi, 2001).

Muhammad also publicly beheaded 800-900 men from the Jewish tribe of Beni Qurayzah in the marketplace of Medina while their wives and children looked on. Muhammad used beheadings as a way to send a message of power, authority and terror to the people of Arabia (Kathir, Ibn. The Beginning and the End, vol. 2, part 4, pp. 118, 126).

Muhammad reported that the angel Gabriel said beheading was one of Allah's punishments for those who reject him. The Quran says: "(Remember) when your Lord revealed to the angels, ... 'I will cast terror into the hearts of those who have disbelieved, so strike them over the necks, and smite over all their fingers and toes.' ... And whoever defies and disobeys Allâh and His Messenger, then verily, Allâh is Severe in punishment" (Surah 8:12-13).

The Arabic word translated as "strike" is used specifically for cutting with the sword. The Quran also says: "So the root of the people who did wrong was cut off. And all the praises and thanks are to Allâh" (Surah 6:45; see also Surah 7:72, 8:7).

In Arabic this actually says "the necks" of the enemies of Islam were cut off. So a radical Muslim terrorist looks to the history and teachings of Islam and sees that beheading is an acceptable way to fight for Allah. However, the majority of

Muslims do not take action on these teachings.

Therefore, the war on terrorism should be approached as two separate battles: (1) how to control Muslim radicals; and (2) how to involve the moderate, or secular, Muslims in achieving complete, long-standing victory.

Unfortunately, the only way to control Muslim radicals is through force and power. Their actions are rooted in the teachings of Islam, and unless they abandon their faith, their deeds will not change. Negotiation is useless.

On the other hand, because moderate Muslims do not apply the full teachings of Islam to their lives Western leaders can work with them in achieving victory over terrorism.

As Christians, our spiritual battle is to give all Muslims the chance to experience the peace and forgiveness that come from following the true God of the Bible.

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