

Critical Facts About Our Military Readiness

Making the news these days is the possibility of a war involving the Ukraine, America, Russia, and Western Europe, a war [opposed](#) by the vast majority of the American people.

Meanwhile, China threatens the sovereignty of Taiwan. The United States has a long-standing relationship with that island country. Would we come to Taiwan's defense? And if so, would Americans be on board with that conflict?

Leaving aside whether America *should* engage in yet another war abroad, we come to an equally important question regarding the Ukraine and Taiwan situations: Does the United States government and military have the will and the ability to win such wars? In a [recent opinion piece](#) for *Task & Purpose*, retired Marine Corps Lieutenant General Greg Newbold casts serious doubt on the question.

Blasting many of our current leaders for ineptitude and misplaced priorities, Newbold also reminds his readers what warfare properly conducted truly means. "Many Americans, particularly our most senior politicians and military leaders," he writes, "seem to have developed a form of dementia when it comes to warfare. The result is confusion or denial about the essential ingredients of a competent military force, and the costs of major power conflict."

The main problem in today's military, according to Newbold, is "one of both priorities and standards."

We signal a dangerous shift in priorities (as just one example) when global warming, not preparedness to defeat aggressive global competitors, is considered the greatest problem for the Department of Defense. ... A problem of standards when every service and the Special Operations

community dilute requirements based purely on merit in favor of predetermined outcomes to favor social engineering goals, and when new training requirements crowd out expectations and measurements of combat performance.

Newbold rightly points out that when leaders stress differences like race among their subordinates, they are creating disunity among the troops rather than cohesion; this lack of unity can be fatal to an effective fighting unit. Newbold also takes leaders to task for involving our armed forces in places like Iraq and Afghanistan; He says that "Hopes for changing cultures to fit our model are both elitist and naïve." He rakes over the coals those who bring politically laden ideology into the arguments for changing our military's training routines, reminding readers that qualities like sensitivity and individuality may work well in civilian society, but that a robust military must practice conformity, unity, and discipline. Citing Critical Military Theory, Newbold writes, "Wars must be waged only with a stone-cold pragmatism, not idealism, and fought only when critical national interests are at stake."

So back to the question I raised earlier: Does the United States possess at this time the force and the will to win major wars?

To be honest, I don't know, and that doubt is in itself dismaying. Never before in my life have I ever thought our military couldn't win a war. I knew that politicians could lose wars, as they've done repeatedly for 50 years, but I never doubted the strength and battle-readiness of our military nor the willingness of our country to defend itself.

Until now.

I'm too ignorant to judge the readiness of our armed services to fight a full-blown war, but I can look around and wonder

whether the American people are capable of enduring such an ordeal. Neither we nor our armed services compare favorably to those Americans of the World War II era. We're horrified, for example, when a small number of American soldiers die in combat, but what happens if we suddenly start seeing thousands of casualties a week in a deadly war?

Additionally, who would refill the ranks if we suffered horrendous numbers of dead and wounded? Roughly 75 percent of young Americans are [ineligible](#) for military duty because of increases in criminal behavior and declines in physical fitness and education. It's not like we have that deep of a bench to fight a massive war.

Moreover, the events of the last two decades, especially the last two years, have revealed the utter incompetence of our federal government. Whatever that government touches—education, the economy, health-care, foreign policy—becomes damaged, left to limp along as a crippled vestige of its former self. Given those dismal results, why on earth would Americans trust that same government to successfully conduct a war, particularly against an enemy who understands and practices the very points of Critical Military Theory outlined by General Newbold?

At the end of his article, Newbold assures the reader that his observations about our military readiness have left the realm of theory and are now "Critical Military Facts."

And we as a nation ignore those facts at our peril.

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