

TRIBUTE

Omar Mora and Yance Gray have died in Iraq, just weeks after they contributed to a powerful op-ed in the NYT. In tribute to their lives, I think it only appropriate to return to their op-ed, which offers a far more honest assessment of progress in Iraq than the Petraeus and Crocker dog-and-pony show. Mora, Gray, and their colleagues call for an assessment of progress in Iraq from the perspective of Iraqi civilians, not from an American-centered perspective.

Given the situation, it is important not to assess security from an American-centered perspective. The ability of, say, American observers to safely walk down the streets of formerly violent towns is not a resounding indicator of security. What matters is the experience of the local citizenry and the future of our counterinsurgency. When we take this view, we see that a vast majority of Iraqis feel increasingly insecure and view us as an occupation force that has failed to produce normalcy after four years and is increasingly unlikely to do so as we continue to arm each warring side.

They point out that the foundation of recent successes in Anbar Province—~~alliances with Sunni tribes~~—does not guarantee enduring loyalty.

However, while creating proxies is essential in winning a counterinsurgency, it requires that the proxies are loyal to the center that we claim to support. Armed Sunni tribes have indeed become effective surrogates, but the enduring question is where their loyalties would lie in our absence. The Iraqi government finds itself working at cross purposes with us on this issue because it is justifiably fearful that Sunni militias will turn on it should

theAmericans leave.

And they point out that the whole purpose of the surge—to bring out a political solution—has failed and will fail.

Political reconciliation in Iraq will occur, but not at our insistence or in ways that meet our benchmarks. It will happen on Iraqi terms when the reality on the battlefield is congruent with that in the political sphere. There will be no magnanimous solutions that please every party the way we expect, and there will be winners and losers. The choice we have left is to decide which side we will take. Trying to please every party in the conflict — as we do now — will only ensure we are hated by all in the long run.

This op-ed is powerful refutation to the Petraeus fog. May the voices of Mora and Gray resonate even after their death. RIP.