

Obama and the war in Afghanistan

Maureen Fiedler | Nov. 16, 2009 NCR Today

I've been watching President Obama's actions in recent days, as they touch the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the military generally. Some have accused him of "dithering" over a decision about sending more troops to Afghanistan. And recent news reports make clear that he is getting conflicting advice from his national security team.

I am glad that he is taking his time. The image I see in Obama is that of a thoughtful, intelligent man weighing the options. He is also demanding an exit strategy, an "off ramp" for Afghanistan.

I also see someone willing to face the costs that will be incurred by his decision, whatever it is. He visited Dover Air Force Base in the middle of the night to meet the caskets of soldiers killed in Afghanistan. On Veteran's Day, he took an unscheduled walk through Arlington Cemetery amid the tombstones of veterans of both Iraq and Afghanistan. He visited grieving military families in Ft. Hood, TX.

Not only that, Rachel Maddow reported that a book about the Vietnam War is required reading in Obama's White House. It's called *Lessons in Disaster: McGeorge Bundy and the Path to War in Vietnam* by Gordon Goldstein. Among other things, it compares the decision-making of JFK, who refused to send ground combat troops to Vietnam, and LBJ, who followed his generals, and did. We all know the tragic result.

Maybe, just maybe, the JFK option -- whatever it would look like today -- is at least being considered.

I doubt that President Obama is as strong a "peace president" as I would like? but then, my ideal probably couldn't get elected. But I am pleased at the obviously thoughtful process he is conducting ...

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