

Marking the passing of some of those who have served this country with distinction. We welcome recollections from family and comrades

ASH William Ash MBE 30 November 1917 - 26 April 2014
Surrendered US citizenship to join Royal Canadian Air Force. Flew Spitfires with 411 Sqn, shot down 1942. Model for Hilts the Cooler King in Great Escape? Escaped from 1945 march

BITTON (later Col) Miloslav Bitton (born Kratochvil) 14 October 1919 - 25 February 2014
Helped Czech airforce and army escapees. Escaped to join Czechoslovak Infantry Battalion Israel. Siege of Tobruk. Volunteered for RAF. 310 Sqn 1945 Spitfire escort for Ruhr raids

CLARKE Capt Thomas Ellis Clarke AAC died 26th April 2014 aged 30 in Afghanistan. See full eulogy published 27th April 2014 on Defence Viewpoints

GORMAN Lt (?) Sir John Gorman CVO, CBE, MC, Croix de Guerre 1 February 1923 - 26 May 2014
Ordered his Sherman tank to ram a King Tiger in Normandy when gun jammed

KEMBALL Brigadier Humphrey Gurdon Kemball CBE MC died 6 May 2014 aged 94

LYNCH Lt Col Ivan Lynch died 1st March 2014 aged 86

MILLAR Lt Gurth Hoyer Millar 13 December 1929 - 6 March 2014
Malay Scouts (SAS) and Artists Rifles (National Service)

MORRIS Lt Col (James William George) Bill Morris RA died 20 May 2014 aged 83

ROE Sergeant (Herbert) Maurice Roe MM and MiD 4 June 1917 - 6 May 2014
Territorial who trained for No 2 Commando, raid on Burhou 7/8 Sept 1942, invited to join SOE as wireless operator in occupied France (Jedburghs) then Force 136 Hyena in Burma

SHEPPARD Wg Cdr Raymond Francis Sheppard RNZAR and RAF died 25th April 2014 aged 91

SMITH Col Stanley Jackman Smith died 30th April 2014 aged 92

VARVILL Lt Col Simon Varvill died 19 April 2014 aged 67

Memorial Day, The Eternal Observance, by Paul Floyd and Ben Sheen of Stratfor

The act of formal remembrance is one of the most profound human gestures, whether it is conducted on the personal or the national level. Originally a commemoration of the Union and Confederate dead from the American Civil War, Memorial Day in the United States codifies the act of remembrance, paying tribute to those who died in military service. Memorial Day is specific to America, but honoring the memory of those who sacrificed their lives for their country, ideals or comrades-in-arms is universal.

Throughout history, the more expansive a civilization, the deeper the pool of resources from which it can draw and the taller its ambition. The collective offers myriad benefits, from breeding stock to greater capacity for production, to increased manpower for agriculture, construction or defense. However, the size of the collective is proportional to the amount of resources it needs to survive. The imperative to use all means necessary, including force, to ensure the longevity of a country, state or civilization, is ever present. Unfortunately, the calculus of conflict has not changed a great deal over the millennia: The interests of the collective endure above all else. The recent events in Ukraine are a good example of how rapidly things can destabilize along these lines.

Human cost is the true price of warfare. It certainly makes sense to postulate that if we cannot do away with war, which seems unlikely, then at least nations can reduce the human toll. Technology, innovation and modernization have gone a long way toward driving down the number of deaths modern armies incur, but this often does not help the civilian population caught in the middle. There is no dispute that civilians should be kept separate from war. So much of modern targeting and rules of engagement is designed to minimize collateral damage, with varying degrees of success. But conflict has an uncanny way of turning up at civilian doorsteps, no matter how advanced the technology. It has many forms, too, from unintended ordnance to suicide

devices, starvation, disease, firebombs, commandeered aircraft, or even an officer and a military chaplain in dress uniform.

In vain, pundits and theorists have repeatedly observed that new advances in technology would either end war in some fashion or eliminate the need for manpower on the battlefield and thus nullify the human cost. Time and again this has proved false.

◆ I Am Become Death

◆ Manhattan Project scientist Robert Oppenheimer was a victim of inventor's remorse, which started to manifest around July 16, 1945, on the day of the Trinity nuclear test. Despite his reflections on becoming death, Oppenheimer's legacy has yet to destroy a world. And rather than make war untenable, nuclear devices have simply become weapons of last resort that have balanced and deterred, but not prevented, war.

Post-World War II conflicts have steadily become more limited in scope. This limitation manifests in terms of geographic boundaries, numbers of actors involved, objectives and the resources committed. The deterrent function of the Cold War helped prevent these conflicts from getting out of hand, the looming specter of nuclear annihilation proving to be a useful disincentive. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has been the sole superpower, whose overwhelming military capability has discouraged large-scale conflict.

Due to these dynamics, U.S. casualties in war have steadily declined and the memory of global conflict is also rapidly approaching its living margin. Increasingly few witnesses to a world war remain. But the stomach for dead young men and women outside of an unavoidable existential conflict is ever contracting.

The proliferation of mass media also means that war can be piped directly to our mobile devices, and the immediacy of this media has brought the consumer closer to conflict, whereas time lag between an event and its reporting used to create a natural buffer. What once took days or weeks in film production and transport now can be done in nearly real time. Memes, tweets, social media campaigns and pictures streaming straight from a conflict far more easily shape public opinion.

But counting your dead as a measure of conflict is illusory. Advancing medical techniques mean that it is now possible to survive horrific wounds that would have been fatal even a year ago. Close to a million coalition participants in the Afghan and Iraq campaigns have received "non-fatal" wounds, many of them classified as "life changing." Losing an eye is life changing but manageable. Losing all four limbs, or use thereof, is beyond the imagination of most. The cost is still very real.

◆ This continued human price tag associated with war has driven a strong movement to remove combatants from the combat zone, or at least have them orchestrate from a distance. But there are problems with that premise too, as well as the emergence of unmanned systems as a military panacea.

Part Man, Part Machine

The logical way to remove the human cost from conflict would seem to be automated combat systems, independent of human control. Beyond even the ethical considerations, or the difficulties of factoring Asimov's laws of robotics into kill-capable autonomous systems, it is generally accepted that self-governing war robots would be fairly poor at hearts and minds operations. Counterinsurgency, if needed, would still require a human touch, not a cold robotic one. And then there is the fact that even remote armies still have human masters, and they become seductive targets. In a time when we value each individual life to the point that we spend the resources to send robots to war in their place, we inadvertently make each life that much more worth the taking. It is also impossible to fully secure a domestic population. In the era of global terrorism (a tactic used in response to overwhelming conventional power), civilians remain the softest

targets. Determined enemies will always attack where they can impose the most cost.

Fundamentally, when mere diplomacy is exhausted, it is left to the final executor of political will -- the soldier, sailor, airman or marine -- to take issue with a nation's enemies, or to look to expand or protect the interests of the state. Those interests are inherently rooted in resources that are finite, which create imperatives in a zero sum environment and inevitably lead states to use force in order to meet them. In this light, conflict is unavoidable, and that conflict will have a human cost.

Ultimately, Memorial Day is about remembering this human cost of war and honoring the memories of those who fought and died. No matter how much we would like to, it is impossible to completely divorce people from warfare. No matter how good technology gets, or how far nations distance themselves from their war fighting, there will always be fresh names to eulogize on Memorial Day.

Editor's note: Reflecting the collaborative nature of Stratfor, our analyses as a rule do not carry bylines. This Memorial Day analysis is an exception. The lead authors are Military Analyst Paul Floyd and Managing Editor of Actionable Intelligence Ben Sheen. Floyd is a former Army Ranger Staff Sergeant. Sheen is a former British Army officer. Both served in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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