
IRAQ WAR VETERANS BLAST DONALD TRUMP FOR BETRAYING IRAQIS WITH TRAVEL BAN

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American veterans who served in the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and subsequent conflicts are decrying President Donald Trumps executive order banning citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries from entering U.S. borders

Trumps ban, which applies to people holding passports from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia and Sudan, led to confusion and panic at airports around the world, and provoked widespread protests at home.

Now, a growing number of veterans are making their dissent clear.

Dario DiBattista, 33, served as a corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps between 2001 and 2007, and is the editor of the book Retire the Colors: Veterans & Civilians On Iraq & Afghanistan.

During a patrol in Iraqs Al Anbar province in February 2004, he was approached by a young Iraqi girl who wanted to have her photo taken.

Thirteen years later, that photo has gone viral on Twitter, fueled by DiBattistas poignant caption.

[The girl] might be 18, 19 or 20 today and if her ideal of making a better life for herself is to come to America after we ruined her country, then I think we should let her come in, DiBattista told Global News.

He adds that his opposition to Trumps immigration ban is a question of moral integrity.

It seems insane that weve lost thousands of our vets, American young men and women □ and I know Canada has also sacrificed in the war on terror □ only to deny those same people we were fighting for the ability to have freedom now, he said.

DiBattista, who reflected on the killing of Osama bin Laden in a Washington Post article in 2011, also says Trumps move could put the lives of American civilians and service members at risk.

If Im working propaganda for a jihadist group right now, its very easy for me to point my finger at America and say Americans dont like you so come join our cause, he said.

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Seth Moulton, a Democratic congressman, served in Iraq with the 1st Marine Division commanded by James Mattis, now the defense secretary.

Moulton stated his opposition to Trumps travel ban in a number of interviews with U.S. media.

Phillip Carter, another Iraq veteran and director of the think tank Center for a New American Security, accused Trump of defiling the Pentagons iconic Hall of Heroes, where he signed his executive order, in an article for Slate.

We relied on these Iraqis and others to show us the way and teach us the landscape in very dangerous and alien places. That we would now turn our backs on these people is too much to bear quietly, he wrote.

The Pentagon says its compiling the names of Iraqis who have supported U.S. and coalition personnel to help exempt them from the 90-day immigration ban.

The list will include those who have tangibly demonstrated their commitment to supporting U.S. forces, Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said. It will contain several categories of people, such as translators, drivers and Iraqi forces who may be training in the U.S.

But veterans who have been aiding translators say it would be difficult to get everyone on the list.

Whats more, they say the ban sends a message to Iraqi soldiers and other Muslims fighting insurgents that the United States does not want them.

Not only is this executive order a death sentence for Iraqis and Afghans who have served faithfully alongside U.S. troops, but it feels like a death sentence for our service members who are in the Middle East, said former Army Capt. Matt Zeller, who runs the non-profit No One Left Behind, an organization working to get interpreters from Iraq and Afghanistan to the United States.

Im only alive because my Afghan Muslim translator saved my life by killing two Taliban fighters who were about to kill me in battle, he said.

Zeller said thats why he grabbed the American flag that flew over his base in Afghanistan and waved it outside the White House this weekend, joining thousands of protesters who demanded an immediate end to the travel ban.

Veterans say the fight feels personal because they gave their word to people who aided American troops that the United States would protect them and their families.

Over 2,000 veterans have signed an open letter to Trump urging him to reconsider his order.

Especially given the global challenges the United States faces today, arbitrary religious tests and policies that scapegoat refugees undermine our nations moral authority and national security □ letter from veterans group Vets for American Ideals.

DiBattista, whose photo with the young Iraqi girl has been retweeted over 55,000 times, dubbed the situation senseless.

Why would we spend trillions of dollars, thousands of lives and tens of thousands more injured to say these people now cant keep the freedom that we promised?

Kaynak/Source: