WAR: All Americans must take an active interest in what troops and their caregivers go through

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what we need to do to help prevent such future tragedies. The ancient Athenians showed us how. We invented democracy and gave us the template for our own democracy.

The ancient Athenians lived in just as confusing and terrifying a world as we live in. Athenians also knew what was just as divisive. Their democracy, during its first 100 years, went through assassinations, foreign military interventions, economic crises, right-wing coups and radical populist extremism. The Athenians were at war almost every winter in the century after the battle for Marathon fought by their own greatest generation, the Marathon-Siegers, in 406 BC. Marathon was their Normandy.

Near the end of that century, the Athenians, at their height of power, fought a 27-year war, all-out war with Sparta. Athenian Kassubes were stagnating, the equivalent of the lost generation Great Britain and Germany suffered during World War I. Yet we have no reports of rogue actions by Athenian soldiers in the field. The few accounts we have of soldiers suffering from war trauma give no evidence that they committed acts of public violence. The Athenians must have had a model for what it was that we are not.

Athenian citizens understood war and its costs. They understood the need to look at war honestly, collectively and openly. They had no other choice. Every Athenian man, woman and child knew the hardships and felt the sorrow of war.

We have been sequestered from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in a war unimaginable in fifty centuries. Among the ancient Greeks, our parents and grandparents, our ancestors, we had no choice. It’s the cost of war. We can’t sidestep it.

In American society today, relatively few citizens are directly involved in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan despite shows of patriotism like waving yellow (ton of) and black and white flags at parades. Much of the burden falls directly on the members of the nation’s military and the families they leave behind.

We are here to tell you what it is that we are told not to show our children and that we are now required to tell them to know that the sacrifices they are making aren’t in vain.

Lance Cpl. Greg Rivers, 20, of Sylvester, Ga., waits for cognitive psychological tests at the Medical Corps Air Ground Combat Center in TwentyNine Palms, Calif., on Sept. 29. The U.S. government is testing hundreds of troops before they ship out in search of clues that might help identify who is most susceptible to post-traumatic stress disorder.

JAC C. HONG

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Our wounds, our duty

War’s weight falls on every citizen, and as the ancient Athenians showed, all must help carry it

By Thomas Palaima and Stephen Sonenberg

Special to the American Spectator

Unfortunately, over the past eight years, our Army has been in a counterinsurgency war, but we are an army that draws strength from adversity. We should salute the heroics of Gen. George W. Casey Jr., chief of staff of the Army, and to us immediately after the terrible attack on Fort Hood.

The war in Iraq has been like a war. There are no enemies, no heroes, no villains. It is a war of fear, a war of stress. The situation in Iraq will only get more difficult for us to tell us since the Athenians fought the Persians at Marathon 2,790 years ago. There are no enemies for all manner of societies that go to war.

Much about what led to the Fort Hood attack remains uncertain. The prime suspect has not been tried, and possible motivations—cognitive, psychological or otherwise—are far from clear. But discussion triggered by the incident is vital to our present concerns.

Casey is right. Our soldiers are in Iraq and Afghanistan and have not been immune to tragedy. But most of us citizens back home have been in our view, we feel, the risk that war’s horror will weigh on us as we continue to isolate our soldiers and the small cadre of mental health professionals who care for them.

Real danger is that, as citizens, we have an obligation to understand what effects war is having on all members of our society and to actively work in making sure the wounds that war inflicts on soldiers and civilians alike are healed. We must actively make sure we have a successful model for our war.

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A soldier stands guard during a joint Iraq police and U.S. military operation searching for suspects from the Maliki Army militia in the Fadhiliya area of Baghdad, Iraq.

Nabil Almohammed

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