

Don't accept the terrorist's strategy

Dr. Lon Jones, DO

Published: November 18, 2015

John Bolton at the American Enterprise Institute is talking about a new level of warfare after the Paris attacks. We all have a tendency to think in those ways. When we are attacked our first response is instinctual and aimed at surviving, and that usually means fighting back. But this instinct is played out in a primitive part of the brain, called by many the 'reptilian brain' because reptiles only have this kind of responses. This automatic response is precisely what those carrying out the attacks want. The 9/11 attacks had the same goal: maximal response for minimum expense. It's the same goal we had when we supported Bin Laden in his war with the Soviet Union in Afghanistan—minimal expense to us, maximal to them—and it helped bankrupt the Soviet Union.

This is their strategy not just because it is costly to us, but because they know that our military responses just ratchet up the jihadist volunteers. The threat of a drone dropping a smart bomb on your head is pervasive, and just as a threat pushes us to resist and retaliate, it does the same to those on the other side.

We will not win this battle by agreeing to jihadist strategy. That response is reptilian and we need to bring human thought unto this; we need to use the cortex.

So what should be our strategy, and what do we really want for us out of this mess?

I think that most of us want a secure homeland; we want our sandbox to be a safe place to play, and despite the money from international corporations pushing our politicians into protecting their global interests our sandbox is our priority—and it's local.

That does not translate into isolationism because the threat is global and needs to be addressed in the global sandbox. But we can't play in another's sandbox without creating some undue hostility just by the nature of us being the power—and in their view often the bully. Sure we can develop coalitions to help, but they are, in the end, ours, and we bear the brunt of blame for the frequent disasters that happen.

We also need to recognize that jihadism is also present here at home. Religious fundamentalism comes from having God on your side and knowing that what you do is helping His will, whether that be flying a plane into the trade towers, burning down a mosque, or killing an abortion doctor. There are values to secularism that need to be actively and even humorously promoted.

In our book, *The Boids and the Bees*, we argue that the best way to secure a safe sandbox is to have a year or 18 months of universal service to our country for our eighteen year old youth. This would include basic military training, service in our military or state militias, just as envisioned and supported by our founding fathers, but it would also include options to serve in the peace corp, UN peacekeeping forces, infrastructure rebuilding, teacher's aids, day care and other service areas.

Such service pulls people together and teaches empathy, which Adam Smith used as a basis for his humane description of capitalism, but we seem to have forgotten.

The cost of such a program, while substantial, would replace a sizable part of our current safety net and shift much of our current transfers, aimed at reducing inequality, to pay for service, with the associated gains in human capital that come from working for a cause.

Getting back to the bottom line of curtailing terrorism, Machiavelli advised those governing to keep their friends close, but their enemies closer. You want to know what your enemies are doing and we cannot think of a better way to put this into effect. Revolts are mostly a product of youthful rebellion. Giving our youth something to work for can change their thinking, and if not it keeps them close. Any teacher or parent knows how important it is to just observe childhood behavior; and so do those looking at the cheating behavior of bankers. Observation provides a witness that can keep behavior on an acceptable track. We think it's a good idea.