

The war over moral authority

Time is often needed to determine rightness of actions

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The rightness or wrongness of acts of civil disobedience is in the mind of the beholder. For example, official lawlessness is openly practiced in “sanctuary” jurisdictions across the nation. The Department of Justice lists a total of 600 cities, counties and states where governing officials refuse to cooperate with federal officers enforcing immigration laws. In some cases, local officials actually interfere with the operations.

Democrats, who support open borders, say this is a matter of conscience, while Republicans say it invites further mass illegal immigration and lawlessness. The cost is hundreds of thousands of missing and trafficked children, hundreds of thousands of overdose deaths, plus rapes, murders and election fraud.

The sanctuary total comprises up to 300 cities and 13 states; nearly all run by Democrats. Along these lines, a half dozen Democratic lawmakers posted videos on X on Tuesday urging members of the U.S. military and intelligence agencies to disobey orders that they believe are illegal.

In “Don’t Give Up the Ship,” anchored by Sen. Elissa Slotkin, Michigan Democrat, the lawmakers tout their own service histories and then urge current military members to “refuse illegal orders.”

“This administration is pitting our uniformed military and intelligence community professionals against American citizens,” they say without providing any examples.

You mean like the 51 national security experts who signed a letter lying about the Hunter Biden laptop to mislead American voters just before the 2020 election?

On Thursday, the president fired back furiously on Truth Social, accusing the lawmakers of “treason” and “seditious behavior.” He said Ms. Slotkin and the others should be arrested and put on trial. He even referenced the death penalty.

Urging service members to disobey the commander in chief is serious business, but Mr. Trump's post left even his most loyal supporters groaning in a time of too much incendiary rhetoric.

The Democrats' call to disobey orders was a response to Mr. Trump's sending the National Guard into several crime-ridden cities to assist federal immigration officials and local police, and for our military's sinking of drug smugglers' boats off Venezuela." We have your back," the Democrats assure rebellious service members in the videos. Good luck with that.

This wasn't the case when the Biden administration fired more than 8,000 military personnel who defied a government mandate to take the COVID-19 experimental shots.

In January, as his second term began, Mr. Trump signed a presidential action titled Reinstating Service Members Discharged Under the Military's COVID-19 Vaccination Mandate. It stated: "The vaccine mandate was an unfair, overbroad, and completely unnecessary burden on our service members. Further, the military unjustly discharged those who refused the vaccine, regardless of the years of service given to our Nation, after failing to grant many of them an exemption that they should have received."

Last week, the Veterans Affairs Department followed it up with an announcement that the affected veterans would be able to access GI Bill benefits.

During the congressional debate in June 2023 over the 2024 defense appropriations bill, Rep. Adam Smith, Washington Democrat, who was ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, opposed automatic reinstatement of the shot refusers. He said it would "undermine good order and discipline" and that "orders should not be viewed as optional."

It's true that the military cannot operate even remotely like a democracy. Otherwise, we would have more than 2 million generals and admirals all reporting to themselves. It would be like the era in the Bible's Book of Judges, when "everyone did what was right in his own eyes." No way to run an army.

It's also true that, as the Nuremberg Trials of Nazis showed, officials can be held responsible for carrying out patently immoral orders. The Trump administration, far from acting dictatorially, has been obeying court orders pending appeals. If Mr. Trump really wants to be a despot, he is doing a bad job of it, except for the incendiary posts.

Democrats blamed the COVID-19 vaccine refusals on "misinformation" about the shots, but it was actually the other way around. Federal health officials acknowledged in July 2021 what they had known all along, which was that the shots don't prevent transmission

of the virus. Officials also managed to suppress the growing toll of reported adverse incidents (1.7 million in the U.S. as of this March), such as myocarditis cases, and the fact that young, healthy people — like most of the military refusers — are not at risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

All things being equal, service members should follow orders. Citizens should obey the laws. Judges should apply the laws, not act as mini legislatures. And so on.

Civil disobedience is a time-honored American tradition, but the merits of each case must be weighed. It can take the passage of time and further events to help us form a consensus about whether a cause was right and certain actions were justified.

After all, we're still debating whether we should have dropped the atomic bombs on Japan to end World War II. If the pilots had refused, they would have saved lives in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but they most probably would have prolonged the war, costing millions more lives on both sides.

The six Democratic lawmakers might want to reconsider urging our military and intelligence services to assess for themselves whether orders are worth following.

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