
Defense Report

AUSA



Everybody Loves a Parade — At Least They Ought To

Now that the people of the Nation's capital and those of its largest cities have held parades to salute the great American servicemen and women who made the Desert Storm victory possible, let's not forget that there are still many troops who remain in the gulf region to help restore some semblance of civility to the lives of the victims of Saddam's aggression. We need to make sure that every last returning veteran of the Gulf War is greeted with the same exuberance and warmth as was the first.

Never mind that there are some critics who conclude that the parades around the nation for our military forces are a hollow mockery. First, these "experts" opposed the conflict on the grounds that American soldiers were not competent and would experience enormous casualties. Then they berated the final phases of the ground war as "inhumane." Finally they criticize the conduct of the war on the grounds that we didn't destroy *all* the Republican Guards, didn't topple Saddam Hussein and didn't solve the Kurdish problem either.

Now the issue is "The Parade." Whether in New York or Washington or Anytown, USA, they now question the legitimacy of the celebration. Instead of listening to them, we should be proud of the things our soldiers have done and are doing. For certain they conducted the war properly and ended it with compassion. Nor should we let the critics ignore the profound events of the last ten months — the process of going to war — the call-up of the Reserves and National Guard, the Congressional debates, the public involvement.

So "The Parade" is a momentary recognition of a group of Americans who sacrifice much. They have manned the outposts of freedom in Europe for nearly 17,000 days and nights, and guard the DMZ in Korea and operate ships and aircraft around the globe. And, when called, they go to war.

After "The Parade" is over, they are going back to duty — to do it all again if needed.