It Is The Soldier

**It is the soldier, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press.**

**It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.**

**It is the soldier, not the campus organizer, who has given us the freedom to demonstrate.**

**It is the soldier, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.**

**It is the soldier, like all veterans, who salutes the flag, who serves under the flag, and whose coffin is draped by the flag, who allows the protester to burn the flag. *(Heard on KFAB Radio in Omaha, Nebraska)***

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**Are soldiers still dying for freedom? For most Americans, Memorial Day simply marks the beginning of summer, said Andrew Bacevich. That’s what the holiday meant to me, too – until three years ago, when my son was killed fighting in Iraq. Now, when I visit his gravesite, I’m haunted by “uncomfortable questions” about why he and so many other brave Americans have died in the service of the country. We like to tell ourselves that “the fallen gave their lives so we might enjoy freedom,” and certainly that was true of those killed in the battle of Gettysburg or on Omaha Beach. But in recent decades, from Vietnam to Bosnia to Iraq to Afghanistan, “the connection between American military intervention and American freedom has become ever more tenuous.” In playing world policeman, the U.S. repeatedly has become “engaged in never-ending wars that we cannot win and cannot afford.” It’s easy to blame politicians for sending young men like my son to die in another nation’s civil war, fighting for goals no one can define. But as citizens of a democracy, we all bear some responsibility. Perhaps that’s worth thinking about, as we light up our barbecues and head to the beach. *(The Week magazine, June 11, 2010)***

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