



## **MICHAEL SULLIVAN, Ph.D.**

### **COLONEL (RETIRED), MILITARY EXPERT, PROFESSOR OF U.S. MILITARY STRATEGIES AND TACTICS, STAR WARS ENTHUSIAST**

Michael Sullivan, Ph.D., is the Director of Programs at Strategic Capacity Group (SCG), overseeing and managing SCG's global portfolio of projects.

Prior to his promotion to that position, Dr. Sullivan served as the Senior Programs Manager for both of SCG's \$12.1M five-country capacity Building and Logistics International Bureau of Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) Sahel cooperative agreement, and the \$6.5M global Law Enforcement Expertise Program (LEEP) grant for INL Knowledge Management. Prior to joining SCG, Dr. Sullivan served 28 years as a U.S. Army armor and infantry officer. His service included five deployments to Iraq, one to Afghanistan, and one to Kosovo, all of which were in a Security Force Assistance role. He served as the Chief of Plans for the 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, Georgia, the United States Army Garrison Baumholder Commander in Germany, and as the Director of the Chief's Initiative Group in the Office of Security Cooperation, Iraq, at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. His last assignment in the Army was at the College of International Security Affairs, National Defense University (NDU), where Dr. Sullivan taught irregular warfare, civil-military relations, counterinsurgency, and counter-terrorism courses to both U.S. and foreign military officers. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army's School of Advanced Military Strategy (SAMS) and a certified Red Team Thinker.

Dr. Sullivan has served as an online instructor with American Military University and as a professor at National Defense University, The Fletcher School, and Georgetown University. At NDU, he was the University Liaison officer to the Los Angeles Police Department, writing their leadership curriculum. Dr. Sullivan holds a Ph.D. from the Fletcher School, an M.A. from Kansas State University, an M.A. from the United States Army Command and General Staff College, an M.A. from American Military University, and a B.S. from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. In his free time, Dr. Sullivan supports the non-profit Shootout for Soldiers, a registered 501c3 using the sport of lacrosse to connect veterans with their local communities. He also continues to study civil military relations through the lens of the Star Wars Universe.

# **Look Toward the Light**

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I was raised Catholic. Mass every Sunday, religious education classes every week, and a strong belief in living a good life. However, it wasn't until I started seeing other parts of the world in conflict, that I truly discovered my faith in a higher power.

Over my 28-year Army career, I saw the worst of mankind: war, death, famine, suffering, and devastation. I witnessed terrible acts of retribution, families torn apart, fear permeating entire regions, and the threat of darkness covering entire countries. But in that darkness, no matter where it was, from Kosovo to Iraq, I quickly learned to look toward the light.

Despite the horrid conditions and acts of hatred, I always found those who spread the light. And it wasn't necessarily the American soldier or civilian, who was supposed to bring relief to those suffering. Often, despite the terrible conditions, you would see a smile on a child's face, a soldier committing an act of kindness by handing out coats before a cold winter, or the gathering of families for religious celebrations despite the threat of violence around them.

While these small acts seem insignificant during the overpowering drama that is war, to me they represent a way to push out the darkness and bring in the light. But you must look for them, capture these moments, appreciate them for what they are, and when possible, share them with others. Is this evidence of God or a higher power? I am not the one to say. But perhaps these acts of kindness, of family, of caring, of love, are exactly what a higher power who believes in mankind would want. Is this not the way?

Too often we counter hate with more hate, violence with more violence. After witnessing the evil of which man is capable, seeing those small yet important signs of goodness always restored my faith in mankind, and in a higher power. It might sound trite to "hunt the good stuff," but in a world in which social media and our smartphones bombard us with bad news, stories of atrocities, and a constant drumbeat of negativity, it might be time for many of us to take a step back and reflect. Put the phone down. Stop scrolling. Look around you for the goodness of your fellow man. You might be surprised at what you see when you look up from the screen and realize that there is more to the world than the negative stories. Trust me. There are good people out there and all you need to do, no matter how bad a given situation might seem, is to look up and find them.

Losing faith in desperate situations often occurs in conflicts or when things seem the darkest. To keep that faith, I argue those in the darkness need to look to the light.