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'A recent op-ed about the war in Iraq charged that upbeat official reports amount to "misleading rhetoric." It said the "most important front in the counterinsurgency [had] failed most miserably." And it warned against pursuing "incompatible policies to absurd ends."

Five years into a controversial war, that harsh judgment in a New York Times opinion piece might not seem surprising, except for this: The authors were seven US soldiers, writing from Iraq at the end of a tough 15-month combat tour.'

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