

Losing Small Wars – British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan
by Frank Ledwidge.
Yale University Press, 2011.

This is the book to juxtapose with those that have been published since the start of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars lauding the feats of arms of courageous British and American soldiers; not because it undermines their contents but rather because it makes their bravery and determination even more admirable, when set against the lamentable levels of strategic planning and equipment.

Frank Ledwidge retired as a naval reserve intelligence officer in 2008 and, as a civilian, practices as a lawyer specialising in human rights law and international development. He has served on the front line and also worked as a civilian in war zones, and he is thus singularly well-equipped to write on this subject. As a long-time observer of and participant in military matters he is singularly well-placed to give the sort of balanced and hard-hitting perspective that *Losing Small Wars* offers. Having said that, this book is a devastating attack on military structures and planning, on military career development and the planning of materiel acquisition.

Ledwidge divides the book into two parts, commencing with Iraq and moving on to Afghanistan; he reviews operational successes and failures (mostly the latter) and the reasons therefore, he looks at relationships between politicians and the military, and between the MoD and the armed services, he denigrates the absurdly top heavy profusion of senior ranks, the legacy of an Empire that has long since been lost, and he makes a number of sensible and cogent suggestions of improvements that could be made.

A famous book about World War One was called *Lions led by Donkeys*, from the content of *Losing Small Wars* it is not hard to conclude that little has really changed.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh