

## A STILLNESS AT CAMP DAVID

Tranquility at the hideaway may be a better term to characterize the 'stillness' between the President and his General...contemplation, broken by the thoughtful silence as one observes the other, eye contact, words, gestures, emotion and mutual respect are part of the grim tapestry of war played out there. It is late August of this year and Iraq is the subject.

"General, you say the counter-insurgency plan to contain, control the critical 'areas' of Baghdad is successful but that the political/economic/cultural/religious relationships-the building part of the plan-are still tenuous with mixed blessings but hopeful. Further, that you visualize partial troop deployment tempered by a series of 'fire brigades' ready to help neutralize trouble spots?"

"Yes, Mr. President but my big worry is the continuing thrust to 'pull out all-together' leaving a tumultuous on-going militant Islam insurgency throughout the Mideast."

"My father was faced with the decision to end the first Gulf War after the liberation of Kuwait and a seemingly defeated Iraqi military via UN auspices, or continue on to Baghdad without Arab and UN support and finish the job; he chose the former. So often hindsight is brilliant but costly, too. History reminds that only WWII with an 'Unconditional Surrender' mode totally left two completely beaten enemies... and no post-war insurgency. WWI ended with an Armistice with an angry Germany over reparations and economic woes. MacArthur argued, 'No substitute for victory in Korea' and was relieved. Armistice there led to continuing problems. And Nixon's peace for Vietnam ended in disaster for the South. We have precedent to stay the course in Iraq and Afghanistan but in retrospect I believe we should have doubled our forces for the post-war status and the transition might have been easier. Hindsight, again!"

The President continued to muse, to ruminate about what might have been and what portends for the future. "General, it is too late for us to rectify the mistakes in Iraq and I worry that 'success' with your counter-insurgency is relative and a new strategy is necessary, one that turns much of the operation and security over to the Iraqis, yet leaving

**a tactical and logistical force of some size there while continuing to use our mobile naval task forces in the Gulf area to monitor (and contain) radical moves from Iran and Syria. War against terror seems to be an anomaly –I did mention we would fight the terrorists and those that harbor them. We may have to tighten the words and express the war mission more specifically. And it must encompass the proxies who continue to act for their sponsors, i.e., Hamas in Palestine/Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon."**

**Since the General was not asked for his opinion he remained mute but listening and perhaps believed this had earmarks of a new strategy. Would this be transitional or something for a new administration to consider?**

**"Wars are enigmas with their own character, evolution and result and often the end is not Utopia, rather it often poses new problems. Radical Islam may be growing while most of the world sleeps. I had hoped that irrespective of the criticism of what**

**I have done, there would be perspective, understanding, and support from the people and their parties. It is conceivable that this 'war' (of ideologies and culture) are really a threat to civilization as we know it. I wish I were the man on horseback who could rally the country - somewhat like post 9/11 - and as my father would say 'we fought WWII as though it were the beginning of the end, and prevailed as Americans. God favors the bold and strong of heart'....I often pray for our country's destiny." Tears seem to well-up in the President's eyes.**