

## **ARE WE AT WAR?**

**What is this thing called war, this crazy thing called war? Who believes we are at war and who believes we are not? And what has it done to all of us? Post 9/11 President Bush said in paraphrase: "We will take the war to the terrorists and those who harbor them." This seems to be a 'strategy' yet it lacks any formal 'declaration of war' and a Bush caution 'we are against radical Islamic terrorists but not Islam per se'. Therein lies the rub!**

**In nostalgia and remembrance I recall sitting with my mentor, Joe Fix post Vietnam, and like those dashing British Colonels reminiscing about India, the Crimea and wars past, reflecting on our wars(WWII, Korea and Vietnam)...for answers and perspective on the War against Terror. General Joe has gone, in repose among the heroes at Arlington. I muse alone.**

**Unlike Pearl Harbor-albeit certain analogies-there has been no formal declaration of war, no resumption of the draft, no blackouts, no rationing of goods and early national anger and commitment has dwindled appreciably. The War on Terror is an anomaly! Declaration of War was absent in Korea and Vietnam along with a lack of will and commitment to victory ending in an 'armistice' in the former and a peace treaty in the latter. Strategy in WWII found its impetus in the doctrine of 'Unconditional Surrender' and left Japan and Germany totally defeated sans any attempt at insurgency.**

**General Joe, I cry out for your wisdom and common sense as I 'chew'on this so-called strategy**

**of Bush and his new team reminded of success and failure in my mind's eye....the crushing defeat of the regular Iraq forces in Gulf I- (Schwarzkopf)and Gulf II -(Franks)-a passing. Post War naivete and rationalization left Saddam in power and recalls the pleading hands of Kurds and Shiia to no avail....The disastrous policy of Gulf II: insufficient forces to govern/control the country, administrative, tactical and strategic blunders, musical chairs of command and assumption the symbolic crash of the Saddam statue, moments of savoring freedom by Iraqis, the face of democracy was the springboard to success. It was not to be! As year four begins, the future is bleak, withdrawal of American troops possible while political osmosis of the fragile, indecisive so-called moderate Islamic states(Saudi-Arabia, Egypt and Jordan) continues.**

**In simple context the new strategy assumes a combined US-Iraqi force employing counter-insurgency tactics to clear and hold the city of Baghdad. Planners foresaw US forces in the vanguard with the Iraqis as part of the combination but the Bush talk inferred that 19 Iraqi brigades with embedded US personnel will be the major thrust with US support of several brigades. This 'troop surge' will enhance this operation and Anbar, an alleged Al-Qaeda enclave. Concept appears to imply the 'insurgent corridor' via Sadr City from Iran will be blocked and cleared. New US commander, General David Petraeus, author of US counter-insurgency doctrine and lead trainer of Iraqi forces replaces Casey and supports the 5 brigade force increase of 20,000 US soldiers and marines. Doctrine assumes the ratio to neutralize a city of over 2 million is much higher - roughly 50,000. Since Baghdad has a mix of Sunnis and Shiias one wonders how the tactical priorities**

**will play out, with a 'Governmental' Shiia majority and the suspicion that Sunnis will be targeted more than Shiia...and will Sadr City be controlled and all sectarian violence curtailed?**

**Quietly, the Bush administration is changing the entire command structure in the Middle East. Perhaps the most significant is the retirement of Gen Abizaid and the selection of Admiral William Fallon as top commander of US forces(Central Command). Fallon a naval flier commanded Carrier Air Wing Eight in Gulf War I. An additional carrier heavy task force will arrive in the Persian Gulf soon with an eye on stability there and a show of force to counter belligerent voices and saber rattling of Iran.**

**Infamy is two-sided- remembering 9/11- and the fear we will leave the Middle East where the die is cast.**