

STI COMMENTS ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

THE IRAQ WAR IS NOT THE WAR TO END ALL WARS

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After months of comment, discussion, suggestions, criticisms and proffered solutions in the Congress, media, and on the campaign trail about how to defeat global terrorism, specifically to deny terrorists sanctuary in Iraq and Afghanistan, one might reasonably conclude that the war on terrorism is the “war to end all wars.” That once terrorism is contained, there will be no major conflicts and no instances of where Americans or American interests are threatened, and should there be, the UN and an American lead NATO will be sufficient to deter such a contingency. The anticipated result is a “peace dividend” of billions upon billions of dollars available to spend on domestic programs and worldwide humanitarian programs. Understandably, there is little discussion about the possibility, most likely the probability, that there will be instances where U.S. vital interests are directly threatened, not by terrorists, but by existing national states or alliances.

Unfortunately, as time has consistently shown, the utopian dream of a war to end all wars is unrealistic. Excluding U.S. and British forces, NATO is a hollow shell both militarily and in its ability to act decisively. Nor does recent history suggest that the UN has the will or capability to insure a conflict free world. The inescapable conclusion is that there will be situations where the United States must act alone without regard to world opinion. Where a loveable America must give way to a secure America

In the run up to the 2008 presidential election, candidates of both parties have yet to address how they will manage a world where conflict, not necessarily terrorist inspired, is always possible. To what extent will they fund a military that must prepare for such contingencies, both obvious and not so obvious. Will they be willing to commit American forces when faced with a non terrorist threat? Will those heading the Departments of State and Defense in the next administration forcefully argue for the

resources necessary to discourage a “Cold War II, always a possibility?

It is understandable why presidential candidates are hesitant to specify how much and for what they will spend on the military beyond that needed to fight the war on terrorism. And to what extent will they diplomatically put America’s interest first in a world of continuing conflicting interests. If not then the candidates, who will ask the hard, specific questions and insist on unambiguous answers to the questions raised above? I believe that, absent others, the media can and should rise to the occasion.