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## **Can World War III Happen In Our Lifetime?**

*By Ernest Steadman*

So much of the news and commentaries on our airwaves, Internet and in print is so discouraging these days. I follow the Middle East developments from both sides of those engaged in the conflict and see absolutely no progress being made. The United States is unyielding in its desire to control some of the oil in that part of the world and to protect Israel, regardless of the horrendous things its government is doing like undertaking to build another nearly 900 Israeli settlement homes on Palestinian lands which Israel originally seceded to them, countered against a Shi'a population in Iraq representing more than half of its citizens who, from a religious point, say NO to any foreign occupation of Muslim lands, on the one hand sounding conciliatory in Lebanon and on the other including Israel in their view of who is a foreign occupier of Muslim lands.

Today it is almost impossible to open and read any trade journal without reading that \$200 a barrel oil may very well be in the not too distant future, 16 months or less. Are they worried? No. But, what does concern them is the real possibility of all that windfall oil revenues winding up in the hands of "militant" Middle Eastern hands. Iran and Syria specifically. Why? Because of our experience with OPEC in the 70's and the effects the oil embargo had not only on America's productivity but the effects it had on our citizen's ability to make a living without sacrificing their consumer purchasing power and its economic stimulus to the nation. What they see are huge numbers of businesses faltering under the heavy burden of oil prices, both domestic and international. They also see all this windfall oil revenues being used to buy these faltering businesses at what they term "fire sales", far below their actual worth.

Globalization and free trade between nations would no longer a part of the equation but a restricting of trade down to a regional or community level. The only catch is that in the aftermath, how many of us will be working and owing our livelihoods to Middle Eastern investors? What effect would this have on our society? Our home life? Or, the very fabric of our nation? I, in my ignorance, have always said our presence in Iraq and Afghanistan has always been about the oil. Perhaps, it reaches much further than that, it reaches into places just now being discussed and explored in the public eye for the first time.

Polls don't often frighten me. When I see a poll conducted by the Democrats I expect a certain amount of liberalism to be reflected. The same can be said of polls conducted by Republicans, exerting a conservative view of the world instead. But, I just read a poll by Men's Health that has shaken me to my foundations. Why? Because Men's Health is the most unpolitical magazine you could find, catering to mostly "upwardly mobile, young American men" and a few old codgers like myself trying to reverse not only the aging process but all the horrid things they did to their bodies out of ignorance.

In the June, 2008 issue of Men's Health (available at your local News Stand), on page 42 is a poll entitled, "Looking For A Few Good Men", in which 4,165 respondents answered the following questions (this is only part of the survey):

77% said our military was "completely unrivaled" and 21% said it was "one of the top few". In asking how to improve its effectiveness, answers ranged from "extending the age of enlistment to 50" to removing the "suffocating rules of engagement that handcuff our troops". With a full one fourth of our nation's budget spent on the military, 80% said to leave it the same or dramatically increase it. 61% said women should be able to "perform combat duties". Although 62% were against the draft, a huge 89% said they would serve if drafted. In the question of one's child joining the military, 90% said they would either agree or would not fight it, and 64% said veterans do not receive enough respect from citizens. 76% said that the military was spread too thin and 84% agreed with the US invasion of Afghanistan. 52% favored our engagement with Iraq.

On the question of strategy currently being conducted in Iraq, 68% of respondents said stay as long as Iraqis met goals or "whatever it takes to win". A full 80% agreed with a "first-strike" on countries deemed a threat to the U.S. with 19% of those respondents not even considering diplomacy as a factor. When the severity of interrogation techniques was questioned, 64% flatly said that "it saves lives". And finally, 40% of respondents said that Islamic Terrorists were the greatest threat to the U.S. China was second at 17%, Iran third at 15% and Russia came in last at 2%.

It would appear to me that the "movers and shakers" of the near future are right in line with the current White House administration and its desire to intercede militarily in Iran, Syria and Lebanon. Perhaps this is why John McCain and Hillary Clinton, in several instances during their campaigns, began to sound like an echo from the current administration as it pertained to world affairs. I don't know if it was driven by polls like the one I have just shared with you or if it reflects their knowledge of what kind of "dark future" America could face in the coming years without the presence and engagement of multi-national oil corporations in the Middle East, corporations in which the majority stock holders are the American people as a hedge against \$200 a barrel oil.

Are we willing to risk World War III to accomplish this?  
Maybe the new dynamic that is being bantered about is the  
alternative would be just as devastating to the American  
people and their way of life.

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