

The Coming Catastrophe: Our Helplessness and Our Response

By Louis P. Solomon

For the past several years we have been involved in Iraq. As a nation, we entered the fray based upon the beliefs of our Intelligence Community, and our senior leaders, including the President, that there were weapons of mass destruction (nuclear weapons) either in existence or that would shortly be in existence within the Iraq arsenal. I will not discuss that today, but I will comment on the coming catastrophe and the need for us as a nation to prepare our active response.



As a nation we have taken measures, political, diplomatic, and military, to try to contain the spread of nuclear weapons technology to those nations that already have it. We have tried to prevent North Korea, Iraq, and Iran from obtaining the capability to build nuclear weapons. We may, or may not, currently be succeeding. But, in the long run, this is an impossible task, and we are doomed to fail. The making of nuclear weapons is, after all, only dependent upon relatively simple physics and chemistry. North Korea and Iran both will have the capability to build nuclear weapons shortly, if they don't have it already. There is no possibility that the Iranians, and their Arab brothers, will not be able manufacture a nuclear device. They will never catch up to the sophistication of US devices, or, probably, the delivery systems. Even so, they will eventually have a number (small, probably) of inefficient nuclear devices.

For reasons on which I can speculate, but really do not understand, the United States has become the monster (in being) to the Arab and Muslim world. There are young men and women who have sacrificed their lives to try to destroy us. At the moment their techniques are crude, inefficient, and generally ineffective. However, nuclear weapons will change the game. They will not be able to destroy or eliminate us as a nation, but they certainly can hurt us. The question is: what can we do about it? Can we prevent a suicide bomber using a crude, inefficient nuclear device from destroying one of our cities? Unfortunately, the answer is: No. If we accept that answer, what should we do?

I believe that we have to exercise a dual pronged policy. Policy One should be an attempt to deal with the Muslim world as our partners in living on this finite planet. We should follow a policy that appeals to their development as human beings. We should certainly recognize their desires to pursue policies and support cultures that differ from ours. I don't mean to overly placate them, but simply to recognize that a contented community generally does not follow highly aggressive behavior. Policy Two should be a further growth in our intelligence community and data base. We should know about their efforts in building a bomb or two, and as much as possible about who is doing what, and how. Then, if the day does arrive that in spite of Policy One, we wake up to realize that Fort Worth, or Kansas City, or Butte, Montana, has disappeared and been erased from the face of the earth, retribution should be swift, immediate, and ruthless. Their entire, repeat, *entire*, country should cease to exist. There should be no discussions, threats, or posturing. We will simply eradicate their entire country; we know how to do it, and have the means to do so.

The uproar from the world community will be substantial. So what? People who threaten us, and then attempt to harm us through aggressive action, should recognize that there are consequences. We will take unilateral action without seeking UN permission. We will not act as part of the United Nations but rather as a country exacting retribution for being attacked. (This happens to be allowed in the United Nations Charter). The rest of the world will look on in astonishment, but, hopefully, with a measure of fear. Other nations will hopefully sit down within their own councils and recognize that some policies are simply not good to follow. Our world is different from the Muslim world, and we do not hold the same social and religious beliefs. However, the lesson we must teach is that the consequences of attacking the sleeping giant is that he responds.

Now you might ask, what about Fort Worth? Well, we can't stop it. I can grieve for them, but that is all. Remember that 50,000 (approximate) people die each year from traffic accidents in the US. That number is

approximately 15 times the number of people killed in the World Trade Center attack; and it is an annual total. I grieve for the people who are killed in the automobile carnage through no fault of their own. However, I cannot stop it. Industry has tried with technology, and done a good job. Our cars are much safer now than they were 20 or even 10 years ago. But, if some guy is drunk and crashes into some other car, killing all the inhabitants, there is nothing that can be done. So, if we lose a city (not desirable, but probable) then retribution should be swift (virtually instantaneous). The entire country, including many innocent people, housed and supported the policies that allowed the destruction of our people. It should be wiped from the face of the earth.

This concept is analogous to the point of view that I hold about the bombing of Japan to end WWII. It was the correct action. At that time, based upon continuing war for 3 years in the Pacific, the estimate was that 500,000 US troops would have been killed attacking the Japanese home islands. The estimate of the number of innocent Japanese casualties was much higher. The estimates showed that there were too many casualties on both sides, but particularly of American troops. So, unfortunately, 200,000 innocent Japanese citizens died instantly in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I grieve for them, but as the saying goes, those are the breaks.

I think that we should do the best we can to live within the community of nations. There will always be differences, and the culture of individual nations and religious communities with different beliefs must all live relatively peacefully on this small, and finite planet. But, it should be clear to the entire world population that we will not allow ourselves to be destroyed without a physical, terrible response. I would have thought that the Japanese example at the end of WWII would have been sufficient; but it apparently has been forgotten. So, we should ready ourselves for another terrible catastrophe which I believe is inevitable.