

HOW LONG WILL THE WAR LAST

At the outset of the American Civil War volunteers signed 90-day enlistments, expecting the war to be virtually bloodless and over very soon. It lasted four years and took the lives of 620,000 young fighting men on both sides, all Americans, more than World War I and World War II combined.

World War I was the first world war in history and was expected to be the last. “The War To End All Wars!” That’s what they called it. WW I was not expected to last very long either. Yet, four long years later 8.5 million soldiers and 13 million civilians were dead as a result of it.

WW I did not turn out to be the end of wars. Barely 20 years later another World War broke out, this one also lasting more than six years and claiming 80 million lives. Just a few short years later the Korean Conflict (we did not even bother to call it a “war”) claimed 50,000 American lives. In Vietnam, a war that lasted almost 20 years, 58,000 American soldiers died and more than 150,000 were wounded, many doomed to spend the rest of their lives disabled physically and/or mentally. The more recent Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts took the lives of 4,500 American fighting men and left us with over 32,000 wounded and maimed. WHEW! I am tired just talking about it.

And now, here we are in Iran, another slam-dunk war that is not expected to last very long. I believe Iran is a justified war. I’m not saying it isn’t. I support our President in his waging of it. A government regime that would murder 30,000 of its own citizens for engaging in peaceful protest is intolerable and evil and deserves to be foiled, not to mention that Iran has funded and orchestrated terrorism all around the world for the past 50 years, has unequivocally declared its hatred of American values, and has threatened to employ nuclear weaponry against us. I dare say a more worthy war opponent we could not find.

Only six American service members have been killed in this war so far. I think it was in one of Iran’s retaliatory bombing attacks against American facilities. I am hopeful that there will not be more American lives lost and that the war will be over soon, that the Iranian people will be able to take advantage of this American and Israeli intervention and that they will rise up against their evil masters to create a truly free and prosperous country for themselves.

Of this noble outcome, however, I am not greatly confident. In fact, President Trump has been honest with our nation by stating that he will not rule out “boots on the ground” in the Iranian war. China and Russia have also been very quiet so far about our attack on Iran, which affects both countries significantly. I believe this war could easily turn into a worldwide conflagration, World War III, if you will, virtually overnight.

And yet, do not suppose that I am criticizing the Trump administration for its attack on Iran. These sophisticated matters are beyond my knowledge and understanding of geopolitics. As much as I understand, however, I agree with and support the Trump administration’s war on Iran.

My objective in these brief paragraphs is not to criticize, but to observe and prognosticate, not as Commander of our Atmore VFW Post 7016, but as a U. S. military veteran of a foreign war. In our years of relative peace, many of us in our country have

come to believe that future wars can be conducted in a sterile field, that we can blow up things without hurting people, that thinking, passionate military fighting men can be replaced by robots. There is certainly a good case to be made for that by men and women a lot smarter than I am. I say, do not be too quick to abandon your reverence and respect for our nation's veterans or our future fighting men, for we may yet need them again. Our soft, precious young men who have never so much as worked up a sweat at any kind of labor may yet have to carry a pack and a rifle into combat, fight tooth-and-nail to capture just one more building or one more hill, and suffer violence of the worst kind, to fight our wars. When the need becomes dire enough, our government will draft them into service by the thousands to serve as their cannon fodder, as they always have.

I hope it is not so. I hope our old veterans die off in time and that veterans service organizations like the VFW and the American Legion, with no one left to serve, become dinosaurs, a "thing of the past." I hope we can fight all our future wars with robots and drones, but I don't think so.

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