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The Scandal at Walter Reed

The scandal at Walter Reed is not an isolated incident. It is directly related to our foreign policy of interventionism.

There is a pressing need to reassess our now widely accepted role as the world's lone superpower. If we don't, we are destined to reduce our nation to something far less powerful.

It has always been politically popular for politicians to promise they will keep us out of foreign wars, especially before World War I. That hasn't changed, even though many in Washington today don't understand it.

Likewise it has been popular to advocate ending prolonged and painful conflicts like the wars in Korea and Vietnam, and now Iraq.

In 2000, it was quite popular to condemn nation building and reject the policy of policing the world, in the wake of our involvement in Kosovo and Somalia. We were promised a more humble foreign policy.

Nobody wins elections by promising to take us to war. But once elected, many politicians greatly exaggerate the threat posed by a potential enemy-- and the people too often carelessly accept the dubious reasons given to justify wars. Opposition arises only when the true costs are felt here at home.

A foreign policy of interventionism costs so much money that we're forced to close military bases in the U.S., even as we're building them overseas. Interventionism is never good fiscal policy.

Interventionism symbolizes an attitude of looking outward, toward empire, while diminishing the importance of maintaining a constitutional republic.

We close bases here at home-- some want to close Walter Reed-- while building bases in Arab and Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia. We worry about foreign borders while ignoring our own. We build permanent outposts in Muslim holy lands, occupy territory, and prop up puppet governments. This motivates suicide terrorism against us.

Our policies naturally lead to resentment, which in turn leads to prolonged wars and increased casualties. We spend billions in Iraq, while bases like Walter Reed fall into disrepair. This undermines our ability to care for the thousands of wounded soldiers we should have anticipated, despite the rosy predictions that we would be greeted as liberators in Iraq.

Now comes the outrage.

Now Congress holds hearings.

Now comes the wringing of hands. Yes, better late than never.

Clean it up, paint the walls, make Walter Reed look neat and tidy! But this won't solve our problems. We must someday look critically at the shortcomings of our foreign policy, a policy that needlessly and foolishly intervenes in places where we have no business being.

Voters spoke very clearly in November: they want the war to end. Yet Congress has taken no steps to defund or end a war it never should have condoned in the first place.

On the contrary, Congress plans to spend another \$100 billion or more in an upcoming Iraq funding bill--more even than the administration has requested. The 2007 military budget, \$700 billion, apparently is not enough. And it's all done under the slogan of "supporting the troops," even as our policy guarantees more Americans will die and Walter Reed will continue to receive casualties.

Every problem Congress and the administration create requires more money to fix. The mantra remains the same: spend more money we don't have, borrow from the Chinese, or just print it.

This policy of interventionism is folly, and it cannot continue forever. It will end, either because we wake up or because we go broke.

Interventionism always leads to unanticipated consequences and blowback, like:

- A weakened, demoralized military;
- Exploding deficits;
- Billions of dollars wasted;
- Increased inflation;
- Less economic growth;
- An unstable currency;
- Painful stock market corrections;
- Political demagoguery;
- Lingering anger at home; and
- Confusion about who is to blame.

These elements combine to create an environment that inevitably undermines personal liberty. Virtually all American wars have led to diminished civil liberties at home.

Most of our mistakes can be laid at the doorstep of our failure to follow the Constitution.

That Constitution, if we so desire, can provide needed guidance and a roadmap to restore our liberties and change our foreign policy. This is critical if we truly seek peace and prosperity.