

INVEST IN PEACE

MATTHEW NOWAK to RIMSIE & SCOTT

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I am a military veteran with over twenty-three years of service, and while I fully support a strong military, I believe that we do not do enough to support peace around the world. Just being the world's police force is not enough in the same way that a strong police force in Kansas City does not prevent crime very well.

Any community, the world included, needs a strong police force to protect us from bullies, but it also requires someone to provide the basic services like food, water, schools, a healthy environment free from pollution, etc.

According to one source, 2000 African children die every day from water-borne biological illnesses. Surely this country has the environmental and technological knowledge and capabilities to insure that children in Africa have access to healthy water.

A country that is willing to conduct a massive pre-emptive killing strike against a perceived enemy should have no qualms about conducting a massive pre-emptive corrective strike against impure water.

Thankfully, there are people that know about this problem and are trying to do something about it with or without the government's help. A missionary couple in Minnesota worked with 3M engineers to develop a solar cooker that heats water and kills any biological agents in the water.

The engineers helped develop an efficient solar oven and a re-usable thermometer that indicates when an adequate temperature has been reached for an adequate amount of time to kill the organisms in the water.

These solar ovens cost less than \$100 each and could be made by the thousands and delivered to Africa to help protect the lives of the children. Additionally, they discovered that once the women learned to cook with the solar ovens, they saved many hours per day of not having to search for dried manure to make cooking fires.

They not only saved time, but the solar ovens are smoke free and their small homes in which they live are healthier now. This is just one small example of how we should be looking for ways to help people around the world to live cleaner, healthier lives.

Just because they live in Africa is no reason to forget about them and go on living the American dream like no one else matters. I believe that providing the means to have clean water, a smoke free house, and some leisure time would actually gain us friends in Africa.

I am one of those peaceniks who believe that helping people live better lives will make us friends who are less likely to take up arms against us. They might even welcome us with flowers and hugs if they recognized Americans as those people who use their technology, intelligence, and wealth to make living better for other people.

Of course culture is a major stumbling block because some cultures do not like the concept of well-schooled women. They discovered that those women with more free time also were more interested in education. Educated women have a mind of their own and some of them do not need men around to provide for them. This has the potential to disrupt cultures in which the men rule over the women.

I have no answer for this dilemma. Religions in these cultures also have a tendency to encourage large families and the women are often stuck tending the children with very little support and often with poor living conditions.

We are presently spending hundreds of billions of dollars on a war in Iraq. I think that we should be willing to spend a few tens billions of dollars a year on peace. I'll bet that peace spending would be far less than war spending and that it would have a better return for us.

I know that a succession of Popes has asked that America do more to help the world's poor. It is time that we invested our wealth, knowledge, and integrity on doing better for the rest of the world.