VFW Wants Pastor Terry Jones to 'Back Off'

Planned Islamic Center Protest Could Produce More Violence

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The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. wants Pastor Terry Jones to cancel his plans to protest the Islamic Center of America in Dearborn, Mich., tomorrow. The city today denied his protest permit, but Jones said he would still lead the protest — and come armed for self-protection.

Richard L. Eubank, a retired Marine and Vietnam combat veteran from Eugene, Ore., said there is nothing to be gained and much to lose from another selfish act that will be interpreted overseas as America being anti-Islam.

Jones made headlines last September when he announced — then cancelled — plans to burn the Islamic holy book on the ninth anniversary of 9/11 at his small church in Gainesville, Fla., but he did follow through on his threat on March 20. Once video of the burning Quran surfaced, it sparked violent protests in Afghanistan that led to at least 90 injuries and 20 deaths, to include seven UN civilians. Jones said he doesn't feel directly responsible for the riots.

"I was brought up to believe you reap what you sow," said Eubank, "yet obviously the pastor forgot that lesson. His self-serving act has already brought death and destruction, and now he plans to hold an illegal protest — and carry a weapon — just to make whatever point he believes to be true.

"The truth is our war is against a small number of religious extremists who kill indiscriminately and without remorse," Eubank said. "Another truth is we don't need an equally small number of religious extremists in America to widen the war by hiding behind the U.S. Constitution."

The VFW national commander wants the pastor to back down and consider the reactions to

his actions before he does them.

"The VFW supports the First Amendment right to protest, but we also insist people take ownership of the problems they create," he said. "Twenty people have already died and 90 were wounded — let's not forget that."