

it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope that my country will never cease to view them with indulgence and that, after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its service with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.

Relying on its kindness in this as in other things, and actuated by that fervent love towards it which is so natural to a man who views in it the native soil of himself and his progenitors for several generations, I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat, in which I promise myself to realize without alloy the sweet enjoyment of partaking in the midst of my fellow citizens the benign influence of good laws under a free government—the ever favorite object of my heart, and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual cares, labors and dangers.

GEO. WASHINGTON.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

IRAQ

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, as I listened this last week to media reports about a reported plan by Senate Democrats to deauthorize the Iraq war resolution, my first reaction was that they cannot be serious; they cannot want to have Senators managing the war on terror from the floor of the Senate. We would be telling our commanders and our troops how to do their jobs.

Under the latest Democratic proposal—which, incidentally, is now the fifth resolution that they have brought forward—that was unveiled last week, there would be no combat role for our troops in Iraq. Yet we would still allegedly have some number of troops there for training, support, and logistics.

I think the question you have to ask with a policy such as that is, What if those troops are fired upon? Can they not return fire because the Senate says they are not to have a combat role?

Just when I thought this debate had reached the low point on the depth chart, the Senate Democrats have drained a little more out of the pool. For weeks now, they have been attacking Republicans for blocking a debate on Iraq when nothing could be further from the truth. Republicans welcome a debate about Iraq. The only difference is we believe it should be a full, fair, and open debate. The Democratic leaders tried to prevent that by blocking any Republican amendments. The Democrats want a rigged, one-sided debate that has nothing to do with substance and everything to do with political theater. That is wrong, and it is wrong for a couple of reasons.

Firstly, it is wrong because it undermines the unique role our Founders designed for the Senate, a place where debate is welcome, a place that is deliberative, and a place where the power to amend is recognized. Under the Democrats' rigged approach, only their proposal gets heard. Republicans asked for just one alternative, one amendment, and it was rejected by the Democratic leadership. Now, I would ask, where is the fairness in that? Where is the openness in that?

Secondly, and more importantly, it is wrong because it sends entirely the wrong message to our troops and to our enemies. Our troops need to know that they are supported and that their mission is supported. Our enemies need to know we are serious about winning. The action taken by Senate Democrats on this issue has trivialized this very serious debate, and I believe we owe it to those who have sacrificed so much, and to their families, to give this new strategy a chance to succeed.

I visited a number of soldiers last week at Walter Reed Hospital. I think that is my fourth trip up there. I have also had the opportunity to visit with soldiers injured on the battlefield at the hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, at Ramstein Air Force Base. These are men who have lost limbs due to IEDs and EFPs. They are an amazing group of people, an amazing inspiration, and they want to know their sacrifice has not been in vain.

This strategy which has been proposed is a change. It originated with our commanders, and it is supported by our commanders. It calls for several things. It calls for some additional troop strength in the region, primarily in Baghdad and also some out in Anbar Province. It calls for different rules of engagement in that fight, and it calls for more Iraqi involvement in several different ways:

Militarily. It gets the Iraqis more into the fight. They take the lead, and the United States takes more of a support role.

Economically. There are requirements that the Iraqi Government invest in infrastructure in their country and that they come up with a way of dividing the oil revenues so that all the different locations in the country can benefit from this great resource they have available to them.

It puts in place political benchmarks as well. They need to hold provincial elections.

All these things—military, economic, and political benchmarks—are things the Iraqis have to meet. I believe we will know in a matter of months whether this new strategy is working. I want it to work. I want to see our troops succeed, and so do most Americans.

A nonbinding resolution signaling a lack of support was bad enough, but now the Democrats in Congress have taken what in my view is a far more dangerous turn. They have embarked on a course which is binding, which has the force of law, and which would have Congress managing a war. That is a very frightening prospect, but that is exactly what this latest Democratic proposal would do.

In fact, listen to what was said yesterday by the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. He was asked on "Meet the Press" by Tim Russert about how many troops would be left behind under their proposal, and he said a limited number. Mr. Russert said: 10,000, 20,000? The distinguished Senator, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said:

I don't want to put a specific number on it because that really should be left to the commanders, who decide how many would be needed to carry out those limited functions.

I am glad there is going to be some role for General Petraeus. I am glad he will be deciding some things in the theater over there.

When the question was asked later on by Mr. Russert: Aren't you tying the hands of the Commander in Chief, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Senator LEVIN, said:

Well, we hope to put a cap on the number of troops. If I had my way, I would cap them. Of course, if I had my way, we would never have gone there to begin with. But of course we are trying to tie the hands of the President and his policy.

I want my colleagues to listen to the proposal that has been offered in the House of Representatives and just recently, this last week, was discussed and debated over there. Essentially, what that plan would entail is that the Congress would decide the particulars when it comes to which troops can go on combat tours and which ones can be extended beyond the year. To be sent into battle, troops would have to have a year's rest between combat tours, and soldiers in Iraq could not have their tours extended beyond a year. The Pentagon's stop-loss policy, which prevents some officers from leaving the military when their service obligations are up, would end.

These are very troubling developments and proposals, particularly when they are considered in light of what the constitutional role of the Congress is when it comes to these types of matters. Congress does not have the expertise or the constitutional authority to micromanage tactics in a war.

I want to read something for my colleagues from an op-ed in the Wall