

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, for up to 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the first half of the time under the control of the Republicans, and the second half of the time under the control of the majority.

The Senator from Missouri.

IRAQ

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I am pleased to report to my colleagues on a trip, an Intelligence Committee trip, that I led to Iraq this past weekend, with Senators SNOWE and CHAMBLISS and Congressman ISSA. We found some very amazing things. We visited Tikrit, Baghdad, Ramadi, Balad. We talked to the commanding officers, sat down and talked with our troops, our soldiers, marines, and airmen.

In Ramadi—which only a month or so ago had been a denied area, an area so hostile that heavily armed U.S. units could not even successfully go in. It was extremely dangerous. On Sunday, as a result of changes that have happened in Ramadi in the last several weeks, the four of us Members of Congress, with the general in charge of the area, General Gaskin, and a driver, and two marines with M-16s, went down to downtown Baghdad. We had no phalanx of troops around us, no helicopters flying overhead. We got out and walked in downtown Baghdad at “Firecracker Corner,” so named, as one might guess, because of the tremendous number of rounds that perpetually were going off in that area.

It was quiet at the time. We went from there into the former Anbar college, which has become the security force headquarters for the area. That building is manned by Iraqi police units, Iraqi army units, and U.S. marines. They were living together, conducting missions together, and apparently they have been extremely successful because Ramadi has changed significantly.

In the last 3 months, attacks in Ramadi have decreased by some 74 percent. I have a chart in the Chamber. You probably cannot see it too well. But the first part shows weekly attacks going from a high of 127, in February, down to 24 in the week of April 20 to 26.

Indirect fire attacks went from 129 per week down to about 10. Improvised explosive device attacks—this is per month—went from over 320 last July, down to, in March, 67 per month; and in April to 28 per month.

Now, what is going on here? Well, it is quite simply that the surge and

clear-and-hold counterinsurgency strategy is beginning to work. The mistake we made previously is we would go in and take out al-Qaida and leave. Well, al-Qaida would come right back. And anybody who had cooperated with the coalition forces would be subjected to death or other severe penalties.

Now, with significant new numbers of Iraqi police and army, backed up by the U.S. military, we are able to go in and clear and hold. That is why the marines, the Iraqi police, and army are stationed in downtown Baghdad. This is becoming—it is not yet a denied zone for al-Qaida.

Now, one of the most important and amazing things that has happened is the tribal sheiks, the Sunnis in that area—if you have been following the Al Anbar progress, the Sunni sheiks run that country. They have concluded—having dealt with al-Qaida, and having had their family members killed, businesses disrupted—they have decided that the coalition forces—American, Australian, British—in cooperation with the Iraqi Army and police are far better hopes for security.

By our making a commitment to go in there, they have made a commitment as well. Now they are volunteering large numbers of men to serve in the Iraqi police and the Iraqi Army.

In just a couple weeks, 1,200 Iraqi young men signed up for the army. There are now over 10,000 Iraqi policemen. They are being trained, and they are taking over the area.

As you look at the entire scope of Ramadi, there are 23 tribal areas. Last year, in one or two of the tribal areas, the sheiks were working with us. Now all 23 have joined with us to fight al-Qaida. There are no uncooperative tribes left. They are joining the military and the police force to help keep the area clear.

In downtown Ramadi, the U.S. military has gone in and been able to repair and help reopen the largest, most important mosque in Ramadi, the mosque that is central for the Sunnis in Al Anbar. It had been closed since the start of the war. Now, this past Friday, hundreds of Iraqis were able to attend services. The U.S. military has supplied and set up mosque speakers in Ramadi to broadcast security messages in addition to messages from the local Imams.

This is just one example we saw. In Baghdad, we learned the clear-and-hold strategy is working. Areas which had been highly dangerous, with a high number of attacks daily, now, because of the presence of the joint security forces—Iraqi, U.S., and coalition forces—have seen the incidents decline by more than two-thirds.

What does this mean? Well, it means al-Qaida is being significantly degraded. Significant numbers of al-Qaida have been killed and detained, and others have been forced out of Baghdad and Al Anbar. Our coalition forces, with the help of the Iraqi military, are, I understand, doing a very

good job tracking them down and eliminating them.

Now, this is not conclusive. This is only the first results of the surge and the effective counterinsurgency strategy. It was recommended by the Baker-Hamilton commission last year, and it is being implemented by General Petraeus, who is an expert on counterinsurgency.

I would say that Marine General Gaskin, who is running Al Anbar, is doing a magnificent job. I was impressed with what we heard from General Odierno and General McCrystal and others who are working to make sure they complete their job.

We also met with the most influential leader of the Shia in Iraq, Ayatollah Abdul Aziz al-Hakim. He is the influential leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq. We talked with him about the need for the Iraqis to find political solutions and to bring together a unity government of Sunnis, Kurds, and Shias to ensure the safety and stability of their country so they would have an opportunity to go back to normal lives and prosper. We have given them that opportunity, and they need to take that opportunity. We need to do a better job of telling people the difference, and our military is doing that. But at the same time, when we met with our troops, they kept asking us why we aren't getting the money. They know they are doing the job, and they asked us a question which is rather difficult to answer: You sent us over here to do a military mission. We are accomplishing that mission. Why are we not getting the money we need? Where are the Mine Resistant Ambush Protection vehicles that can reduce injuries and deaths so significantly? There was no answer, other than it has been delayed.

Let me conclude by saying we are making great progress, and we cannot afford to tell our troops we are not going to support them by sending in a bifurcated budget, funding a month at a time, a month at a time, because they have a several months' long game plan. When they hear people say that the war is lost, they say: We are risking our lives every day, because the war is not lost. What are people in Congress thinking? We cannot tell the Iraqis and our troops that we are going to cut out of here in a couple of months because we will lose the cooperation of the tribal sheiks and the others who are helping us against al-Qaida if they think we are about ready to leave and leave them at the mercy of al-Qaida, which will come back in if we leave prior to establishing strength in the Iraqi security forces that will enable them to prevent al-Qaida from taking over their country.

Make no mistake about it, that is the goal of al-Qaida. Our intelligence community unanimously says it. Ayman al-Zawahiri has said it, Osama bin Laden has said it. If we don't believe them, at least we ought to believe our intelligence community.