

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

BRING THE SOLDIERS HOME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, they say they care about the soldiers. The President and his administration talk a lot about the soldiers, but in Iraq, the situation keeps getting worse. There are another 18 months left in this administration, and unless the Republicans finally dig in and demand action instead of words, casualties will continue to rise at a horrendous rate. In the 18 months the President remains in office, 1,800 more soldiers will die and 18,000 more U.S. soldiers will be wounded if they keep up at the present rate.

We are suffering as mightily as we did in Vietnam, and the results are just as catastrophic and just as preventable. We have a choice, but this President chooses to spend more U.S. lives in Iraq, and he does so with the full support of the Republican Party, which is the only way he can survive.

The American people have spoken, the Democratic Party has spoken, we all said the same thing: Set a timetable and get U.S. soldiers out of Iraq's civil war. Even the majority of Iraq's elected Parliament has demanded a timetable for U.S. withdrawal, but the President ignores it all.

So far, the Republican Party has sat on its conscience and given the President every blank check he asks for. Too many Republicans in this House and Senate know the truth, but they remain silent and acquiescence and give up their congressional responsibility.

The American people have submerged the President's approval rating in an effort to get his attention, but he keeps ignoring the fact, the evidence and the lessons of history. And it is possible because blind allegiance has become the litmus test of the members of his party.

Republicans used to give the President blank checks, now they give him a rubber stamp veto to keep Americans fighting and dying in a war he lost several years ago. U.S. casualties will continue to rise at the President continues to escalate his stay-the-course policy in Iraq.

The President's stubbornness has nothing to do with taking new ground in Iraq, but it has everything to do with gaining rights to what's underground in Iraq, the oil wealth of the Iraqi people. That's why the rhetoric is already being planted by the administration with friendly media that Sep-

tember won't really matter when it comes to a progress report. As Frank Rich reported in the Sunday New York Times, the fix is already on. And I will enter this journalism into the RECORD.

[From the New York Times, June 24, 2007]

THEY'LL BREAK THE BAD NEWS ON 9/11

(By Frank Rich)

By this late date we should know the fix is in when the White House's top factotums fan out on the Sunday morning talk shows singing the same lyrics, often verbatim, from the same hymnal of spin. The pattern was set way back on Sept. 8, 2002, when in simultaneous appearances three cabinet members and the vice president warned darkly of Saddam's aluminum tubes. "We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud," said Condi Rice, in a scripted line. The hard sell of the war in Iraq—the hyping of a (fictional) nuclear threat to America—had officially begun.

America wasn't paying close enough attention then. We can't afford to repeat that blunder now. Last weekend the latest custodians of the fiasco, our new commander in Iraq, Gen. David Petraeus, and our new ambassador to Baghdad, Ryan Crocker, took to the Sunday shows with two messages we'd be wise to heed.

The first was a confirmation of recent White House hints that the long-promised September pivot point for judging the success of the "surge" was inoperative. That deadline had been asserted as recently as April 24 by President Bush, who told Charlie Rose that September was when we'd have "a pretty good feel" whether his policy "made sense." On Sunday General Petraeus and Mr. Crocker each downgraded September to merely a "snapshot" of progress in Iraq. "Snapshot," of course, means "Never mind!"

The second message was more encoded and more ominous. Again using similar language, the two men said that in September they would explain what Mr. Crocker called "the consequences" and General Petraeus "the implications" of any alternative "courses of action" to their own course in Iraq. What this means in English is that when the September "snapshot" of the surge shows little change in the overall picture, the White House will say that "the consequences" of winding down the war would be even more disastrous: surrender, defeat, apocalypse now. So we must stay the surge. Like the war's rollout in 2002, the new propaganda offensive to extend and escalate the war will be exquisitely timed to both the anniversary of 9/11 and a high-stakes Congressional vote (the Pentagon appropriations bill).

General Petraeus and Mr. Crocker wouldn't be sounding like the Bobbsey Twins and laying out this coordinated rhetorical groundwork were they not already anticipating the surge's failure. Both spoke on Sunday of how (in General Petraeus's variation on the theme) they had to "show that the Baghdad clock can indeed move a bit faster, so that you can put a bit of time back on the Washington clock." The very premise is nonsense. Yes, there is a Washington clock, tied to Republicans' desire to avoid another Democratic surge on Election Day 2008. But there is no Baghdad clock. It was blown up long ago and is being no more successfully reconstructed than anything else in Iraq.

When Mr. Bush announced his "new way forward" in January, he offered a bouquet of promises, all unfulfilled today. "Let the Iraqis lead" was the policy's first bullet point, but in the initial assault on insurgents now playing out so lethally in Diyala Province, Iraqi forces were kept out of the fighting altogether. They were added on

Thursday: 500 Iraqis, following 2,500 Americans. The notion that these Shiite troops might "hold" this Sunni area once the Americans leave is an opium dream. We're already back fighting in Maysan, a province whose security was officially turned over to Iraqi authorities in April.

In his January prime-time speech announcing the surge, Mr. Bush also said that "America will hold the Iraqi government to the benchmarks it has announced." More fiction. Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's own political adviser, Sadiq al-Rikabi, says it would take "a miracle" to pass the legislation America wants. Asked on Monday whether the Iraqi Parliament would stay in Baghdad this summer rather than hightail it to vacation, Tony Snow was stumped.

Like Mr. Crocker and General Petraeus, Mr. Snow is on script for trivializing September as judgment day for the surge, saying that by then we'll only "have a little bit of metric" to measure success. This administration has a peculiar metric system. On Thursday, Peter Pace, the departing chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called the spike in American troop deaths last week the "wrong metric" for assessing the surge's progress. No doubt other metrics in official reports this month are worthless too, as far as the non-reality-based White House is concerned. The civilian casualty rate is at an all-time high; the April-May American death toll is a new two-month record; overall violence in Iraq is up; only 146 out of 457 Baghdad neighborhoods are secure; the number of internally displaced Iraqis has quadrupled since January.

Last week Iraq rose to No. 2 in Foreign Policy magazine's Failed State Index, barely nosing out Sudan. It might have made No. 1 if the Iraqi health ministry had not stopped providing a count of civilian casualties. Or if the Pentagon were not withholding statistics on the increase of attacks on the Green Zone. Apparently the White House is working overtime to ensure that the September "snapshot" of Iraq will be an underexposed blur. David Carr of The Times discovered that the severe Pentagon blackout on images of casualties now extends to memorials for the fallen in Iraq, even when a unit invites press coverage.

Americans and Iraqis know the truth anyway. The question now is: What will be the new new way forward? For the administration, the way forward will include, as always, attacks on its critics' patriotism. We got a particularly absurd taste of that this month when Harry Reid was slammed for calling General Pace incompetent and accusing General Petraeus of exaggerating progress on the ground.

General Pace's record speaks for itself; the administration declined to go to the mat in the Senate for his reappointment. As for General Petraeus, who recently spoke of "astounding signs of normalcy" in Baghdad, he is nothing if not consistent. He first hyped "optimism" and "momentum" in Iraq in an op-ed article in September 2004.

Come September 2007, Mr. Bush will offer his usual false choices. We must either stay his disastrous course in eternal pursuit of "victory" or retreat to the apocalypse of "precipitous withdrawal." But by the latest of the president's ever-shifting definitions of victory, we've already lost. "Victory will come," he says, when Iraq "is stable enough to be able to be an ally in the war on terror and to govern itself and defend itself." The surge, which he advertised as providing "breathing space" for the Iraqi "unity" government to get its act together, is tipping that government into collapse. As Vali Nasr, author of "The Shia Revival," has said, the new American strategy of arming Sunni tribes is tantamount to saying the Iraqi government is irrelevant.