

for GEN David Petraeus to be confirmed as our Nation's top military commander in Afghanistan. I want to say I have had a great experience with General Petraeus and also watching him from afar. When he introduced the concept of the counterinsurgency in Iraq, and embedding our troops with Iraqi troops to try to train the Iraqi troops to do the security for Iraq as we were leaving, I had grave concerns about embedding our troops and the counterinsurgency, because I feared for the safety of our troops and troop protection. I did not want to publicly ask questions of his judgment or disagree with him, but I did ask him to come see me and explain this to me so I would feel more comfortable, which he did. He came to my office. He walked me through it. He gave me confidence that it could work.

Then later, when he was in Iraq, and I was taking one of the trips I have made to Iraq, the first place that General Petraeus sent me to see was the Iraqi police station with our embedded troops. He never said a word to me about my questioning of how it would work, but he sent me in.

Later that night I was able to have dinner with him and Ambassador Crocker. I said: I know why you sent me to the police station, because I had questioned how you were going to protect our troops. I became a complete believer in General Petraeus and certainly how they do protect our troops as we are also teaching the foreign forces to take on their own security.

So I do have complete confidence in this man. What I do not have confidence in is the mission he is being given, because I sense a mixed message. I sense a mixed message from the President, and a division in what our Members of the Senate are saying, even as they questioned General Petraeus yesterday.

Here is my concern. We know you cannot set a hard and fast deadline and say, our troops are leaving no matter what the conditions are, and gain the confidence of the people on the ground that you are going to see the mission through.

It seems our mission should be clear, that we are going to prepare the Afghans for the security of their country, and also assure that the Taliban and al-Qaida cannot get a stronghold that would allow the export of terrorism to America and other freedom-loving countries in the world. That should be the clear mission.

I believe that is the mission General Petraeus understands, and I think that is what President Obama is saying. But my concern is this questioning of General Petraeus by members of the Armed Services Committee about the withdrawal date.

The President has said firmly the withdrawal is going to be July of next year. General Petraeus is very careful in every answer that he makes to say, conditions on the ground will dictate when we withdraw. July is the date. We

acknowledge that, he says. But it will also depend on conditions on the ground.

I hope we will have a united view in the Senate, a united view in the House of Representatives, and the President acknowledging that we must have the confidence of the people on the ground in Afghanistan and also the confidence of the enemy, the Taliban, and al-Qaida, that we are not going to leave in July if there are not conditions on the ground for the Afghans to repel the evil forces of the Taliban and al-Qaida.

As we vote today on the confirmation of General Petraeus, I am voting for this general because I believe in him. I believe in his creativity. I believe in his judgment. I want to make sure he has everything he needs to do the job we are asking him to do. He has proven he can do the tough jobs.

He changed the atmosphere in Iraq and he did it the right way. He protected our forces as he was doing it. So we must assure that we give him the same level of confidence and support in Afghanistan to do the job there, because it is clear that the place where al-Qaida and the Taliban are operating from is that area of Pakistan and Afghanistan, and we cannot allow them to strengthen their efforts to be able to export terrorism to our country again.

At the same time, we have got to make sure there is not a bull's-eye on the back of our troops in Afghanistan because the enemy thinks we are leaving no matter what. Conditions on the ground are the prerequisite. I hope the President has given General Petraeus the level of confidence that I feel in him, and that I think our Senate will show to him today to do the job as he sees fit, because he is going to have the boots on the ground in Afghanistan.

I have been to Afghanistan, as have most of my colleagues. I know how tough it is, the terrain, the type of government they have had throughout their centuries, and it is not adaptable easily to our concept of governance. So we have to work within a framework that is very difficult both geographically as well as in the governance structure.

I am voting for General Petraeus today because I know this man can do the job. I hope the President will give him the free rein to do the job we are asking him to do, and, in the process, protect our troops and protect him as they are doing this very tough job with everything he asks us to provide to him to finish this job and make the Afghan people say—give them the ability to create their governance in a way that works for them and to protect the people of the United States from any further terrorist attack.

That is when we will be able to say "mission accomplished." And General Petraeus can do this job. We must give him the backup so he can be successful.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

##### NOMINATION OF DAVID H. PETRAEUS TO BE GENERAL

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of David H. Petraeus, Department of the Army, to be General.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 20 minutes for debate with respect to the nomination, with the time equally divided and controlled between the Senator from Michigan, Mr. LEVIN, and the Senator from Arizona, Mr. MCCAIN, or their designees.

The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I yield myself 8 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. The Senate will soon vote on the nomination of GEN David Petraeus, who is once again stepping forward to render invaluable service to our Nation, as he has so often in the past. Certainly the events that bring General Petraeus to this moment were unforeseen. But we can be certain that when confirmed, he will bring highly experienced leadership and a profound understanding of the President's strategy in Afghanistan which he helped shape as Commander of the U.S. Central Command.

General Petraeus confirmed yesterday before the Armed Services Committee that he fully supports the President's strategy. That strategy includes a surge of U.S. combat troops who will be in place later this year.

That strategy includes a counterinsurgency campaign focused on securing the safety of Afghanistan's population and pursuing the insurgents who threaten that safety. The President's strategy, which General Petraeus supports, includes the setting of a July 2011 date to begin reductions of U.S. combat troops as a way of focusing the attention of the Afghan Government and military on preparing Afghan forces to take greater responsibility for the security of their own people. I have long believed that focusing on building the capacity of the Afghan security forces to secure their nation's future is