

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.

For the Bush White House, the real definition of victory has become "anything they can get away with without taking blame for defeat," said the retired Army Gen. William Odom, a national security official in the Reagan and Carter administrations, when I spoke with him recently. The plan is to run out the Washington clock between now and Jan. 20, 2009, no matter the cost.

Precipitous withdrawal is also a chimera, since American manpower, materiel and bases, not to mention our new Vatican City-sized embassy, can't be drawn down overnight. The only real choice, as everyone knows, is an orderly plan for withdrawal that will best serve American interests. The real debate must be over what that plan is. That debate can't happen as long as the White House gets away with falsifying reality, sliming its opponents and sowing hyped fears of Armageddon. The threat that terrorists in civil-war-torn Iraq will follow us home if we leave is as bogus as Saddam's mushroom clouds. The Qaeda that actually attacked us on 9/11 still remains under the tacit protection of our ally, Pakistan.

As General Odom says, the endgame will start "when a senior senator from the president's party says no," much as William Fulbright did to L.B.J. during Vietnam. That's why in Washington this fall, eyes will turn once again to John Warner, the senior Republican with the clout to give political cover to other members of his party who want to leave Iraq before they're forced to evacuate Congress. In September, it will be nearly a year since Mr. Warner said that Iraq was "drifting sideways" and that action would have to be taken "if this level of violence is not under control and this government able to function."

Mr. Warner has also signaled his regret that he was not more outspoken during Vietnam. "We kept surging in those years," he told *The Washington Post* in January, as the Iraq surge began. "It didn't work." Surely he must recognize that his moment for speaking out about this war is overdue. Without him, the Democrats don't have the votes to force the president's hand. With him, it's a slam dunk. The best way to honor the sixth anniversary of 9/11 will be to at last disarm a president who continues to squander countless lives in the names of those voiceless American dead.

The truth about September will be that the President is still losing the Iraq war, but that's not what we will be told, nor will the President tell the American people that he has no plan to treat all the gravely wounded soldiers returning from Iraq. Already America has lost over 3,500 soldiers, as many as 53,000 more are gravely wounded. As many as 50,000 more may yet be afflicted with post traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury.

As the Associated Press reported over the weekend, our government is overwhelmed now in trying to care for our wounded, and the President has this Nation on course to see 20,000 more casualties before he leaves office. That's what will happen unless his own Republican Party finally tells him and the American people the truth about Iraq, and the urgent need to get their soldiers out of harm's way.

The Vietnam Memorial in Washington is a place where we commemorate the soldiers who died during the last failed war. Had enough people gotten through to the President back in 1968, there would only be one side of

that Memorial because we could have saved at least 25,000 lives. That's why we have to get through to the President today. The American people can't, the Democratic Party can't, even the Iraq Parliament can't. That leaves only the Republican Party to stop the memorial to Iraq's fallen heroes from growing any larger than it already will be.

We have a chance today to save U.S. lives by seeing the Iraq war for what it is and what it isn't. It is a civil war created by us, and it isn't in America's interest to be there.

Bring the soldiers home, Mr. President.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WATERS addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it's an honor to address the House, and it's good to be here before we go on 4th of July break to celebrate the birthday of this great country.

As you know, in the 30-something Working Group, we come to the floor to discuss a number of issues that are facing the American people, and also, I think it's important to identify our focus on the issues in Iraq and Afghanistan and the issues that are facing the American people.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the events over the weekend in Iraq and also in Afghanistan even give us further focus on making sure that the issues that are facing our men and women that are in harm's way are addressed here in the Congress. I think it's also very important for us to focus on what has not happened in this Congress as it relates to making sure that we meet the needs of our men and women.

We have appropriation bills that have been held up in the process that are now moving through the process. It's not because of the majority side's lack of will to be able to move them, it's the fact that we have some of our friends on the other side of the aisle that see it fit to slow the process down, but that argument is for another day.

As you know, I'm one of the Members, especially on this side of the aisle, that push for bipartisanship. Mr. Speaker, I spend quite a bit of time here on the floor talking about how when we work together, we're able to move the American agenda forward. And I look forward to continuing to stand up on behalf of bipartisanship here in the House to accomplish a goal

to be able to make sure that our men and women in harm's way are able to receive the representation that the American people voted for.

Mr. Speaker, I think also what we should touch on is the fact that we have sent a number of documents to the White House, and those documents happen to be law, or proposed law. We had a bill that passed both House and Senate emergency supplemental that had not only benchmarks in it, but also withdrawal dates that were sensible and that were timely to let the Iraqi Government know that we will not continue to reward a lack of action on their side and accomplishment on their side as it relates to securing Iraq. That was vetoed by the President. But I can say that not one Democrat went to the White House and stood behind the President and said that we will stop any override of the President's veto.

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I am so glad that we did send that bill there to show the American people that we are willing to do the things that we need to do.

We also passed a nonbinding resolution against the surge in Iraq, the escalation, I must add, in Iraq of U.S. troops and personnel. That was a strong message that the American people wanted to send out. That was successfully passed. Now, we are going to have two reports when we get back July 15, I would say to Mr. LARSON, our Vice Chair, in a report in September. I think it is going to be very, very important for the Members to remember that we are Americans first, Members of Congress. Along with that, that first chair that I mentioned, and on the second hand, that we are from two different parties, because there are men and women who are counting on us to work together.

But those of us on this side of the aisle have to provide the leadership. If the leadership doesn't come from the White House, then we are here, sent by American taxpayers, American voters, to represent them from the said districts that we are from. But it is important that we provide that leadership and opportunity.

I would like to yield to my good friend, Mr. JOHN LARSON, from the great State of Connecticut. He is our Vice Chair of the Democratic Caucus. I want to thank you, sir, for your leadership on this very issue of Iraq.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Well, let me first and foremost congratulate the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK), and Mr. RYAN and Mrs. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and Mr. MURPHY for continuing to come to the floor, the 30-somethings, and talk about issues that are so important to this country. There is no more important issue before this Congress or this country, than the war in Iraq.

There is no more important issue to the American public. But it is clear, and I think General Odom stated it