

at Mississippi College of Law. He has had service as a senior Justice Department official. He has had more than 20 years in private practice in Jackson. He is rated unanimously "well qualified" by the American Bar Association. He has been honored by the Mississippi State Bar with its Judicial Excellence Award.

What is it about the Democrats and Mississippi judges? This is an enormously well-qualified judge from Mississippi, and the Democrats, apparently because he is from Mississippi, do not want to give him a fair up-or-down vote. That is totally unfair and it is beneath the dignity of this body and I object to it strenuously. This judgeship has been labeled a "judicial emergency" by the nonpartisan Administrative Office of the Courts.

What is the manufactured case? The case that has been made against him, if a student were to send it in to any accredited law school, would be sent back with an F and the student would be told to prepare better.

First, it is said he participated in an opinion he didn't even write which put the first amendment ahead of a racial slur. That is always—always—a difficult decision to make, but the Mississippi Supreme Court said it was the correct decision. Judge Southwick reiterated his disdain for racial slurs. He said the racial slur in question is "always offensive" and "inherently and highly derogatory."

He did not even write the opinion. Yet for some reason that is thought to be inappropriate.

Then they said he joined in a case that used the words "homosexual lifestyle." He didn't write the opinion. That phrase "homosexual lifestyle" may not be preferred by some, but it is very commonly used in American legal opinions by the U.S. Supreme Court, for example, in *Lawrence v. Texas*, striking down the Texas ban on sodomy. It was also used by President Bill Clinton when he announced his "don't ask don't tell" policy. That is the manufactured case.

So I ask my colleagues to remember the difficulties we had in 2003 and 2004, when the Senate did not look at its best, when it was manufacturing cases against otherwise well-qualified and distinguished men and women who had been nominated to the court.

I hope the Judiciary Committee will bring Judge Leslie Southwick's name forward to the full Senate so we can have an up-or-down vote. He deserves a vote. The Senate deserves to respect its traditions regarding nominees, and the American people deserve to be served by a man of such quality.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 7 minutes, and at 6 minutes, if I am still speaking, will the Chair please let me know.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair will so notify the Senator.

IRAQ

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, there have been some in the leadership of the majority, a few months ago, who declared the war in Iraq was lost. There have been others who have been invested in two significant debates we have had over withdrawing precipitously without any consideration for the consequences. I have steadfastly supported our effort in the global war on terror and, in particular, our effort in Iraq, cautious to understand we have had difficulties and we have made mistakes. But today I rise to ask those who have, in the past, declared defeat or withdrawal to consider the alternative should America win.

Yesterday, in the *New York Times*, Kenneth Pollack and Michael O'Hanlon wrote a significant editorial—neither one an advocate, per se, of the war and the surge—that said this is a war we might win. News that comes today from the *Christian Science Monitor* declares a precipitous decline in the number of deaths of U.S. soldiers and casualties and a tremendous decrease in IEDs.

On Monday night, the people of Iraq in every city, hamlet, and town turned out in the streets, and without a single injury, they celebrated the victory of the Iraqi soccer team in the Asian soccer games.

We must ask the question: What do we say if, in fact, the tide has turned and we are winning? I think there may be some who will try and redescribe what victory is, and for that purpose, I wish to describe and remind everybody of what we already declared victory would be.

When President Bush asked all of us, and I supported going into Iraq to enforce Resolution 1441 of the United Nations with 29 other partners, we declared three goals: One, to find the weapons of mass destruction and to depose Saddam Hussein; two, to allow the Iraqis the chance to hold free elections and write a constitution; and, three, to train the Iraqi military so it was capable of defending the people of Iraq.

Saddam Hussein is gone, tried by his people and gone from this planet. Weapons of mass destruction—no smoking gun was found, but all the components were Scud missiles buried in the sand, elements of sarin gas in the Euphrates River, some of the biological mobile laboratories we thought were there were found, and 400,000 bodies in 8 mass graves near Baghdad in Iraq. So that was accomplished.

Second, the Iraqis held three elections, wrote a constitution, and now meet in a parliamentary form of government. It may not be everything we like, but it is their Government and their progress, and America gave them the opportunity to do it.

Now today in Iraq on the ground, Shiites who fought against us have

joined with us against al-Qaida. Sunnis who fought against us have joined us in fighting against al-Qaida. In Ramadi, the streets are clear. The people in Baghdad are happy the American soldiers are there and afraid American soldiers may leave precipitously.

We are on the cusp of meeting the third goal. Iraqi troops—it is being recognized now—Iraqi battalions have, in some cases—not all, in some cases—demonstrated the capability of holding the areas Americans have secured. America's soldiers are in the same camps with Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish soldiers of the Iraqi military.

This war is not over, but two-thirds of the goals we established are accomplished, and the third goal is within our reach. When we look in the next 6 weeks toward September 15—and I don't know what General Petraeus is going to say, but I know what the *New York Times* is saying, I know what the *Christian Science Monitor* is saying, I know what the Georgia soldiers I talk with or get e-mails from on the ground are saying, I know what the attitude and morale of the American soldiers is and the hopes and aspirations of the American people. Today I ask that as we get ready to break, as we wait for the report on September 15, we need to be prepared for victory, not invested in defeat.

This has been a tough battle. Some of my friends in Georgia have lost their children. They have fought for a dream Americans have fought for since this great Republic was founded, and that is the right to self-determine your future.

I hope the Government of al-Maliki will accomplish some reconciliation. I hope they will accomplish a hydrocarbon deal. I hope deBaathification can work. But I hope we would not declare failure when, in fact, we have the opportunity it looks like to succeed. A lot of brave young men and women in America have invested their lives in the chance to win a victory, not for ourselves but for mankind, for civility, for peace, for democracy, and for all the principles upon which this country was founded.

So I hope for those who have been invested in the possibility that we will fail, that they will get equally invested in the probability or possibility that we will succeed and that together, as a Congress, we can reward those who fought so valiantly and see to it that one more democracy is born in the Middle East of this world.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that an article that appeared this morning in the *Christian Science Monitor* and yesterday's article of Michael O'Hanlon and Kenneth Pollack in the *New York Times* be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Christian Science Monitor, Aug. 1, 2007]

U.S. TROOP FATALITIES IN IRAQ DROP SHARPLY

(By Gordon Lubold)

U.S. troop fatalities in Iraq have plummeted from near-historic highs just two months ago. The number of deaths attributed to improvised explosive devices is down by more than half. Violence is down in the four most dangerous provinces.

The decrease is an apparent sign that, by at least one indicator, the surge of American forces is doing something it set out to do: tamp down the violence.

But even if this positive trend were to continue for the next several months, the larger question remains unanswered: will the reduced levels of violence push Kurdish, Shiite, and Sunni groups to reach political reconciliation so that U.S. troops can withdraw? U.S. military officials are wary.

"Success does not hinge on the effectiveness or success solely of the security situation," says one senior official in uniform, who requested anonymity, echoing what many military officials have said. "It really depends on political governance."

As a single measure of success or failure in Iraq, the rate of American fatalities has its own limitations. But it does reflect the ability of the US to reduce insurgent-led violence. Two months ago, U.S. fatalities climbed to 128, making May the third deadliest month for US troops in Iraq since the war began in 2003. But since then, as the surge of 30,000 new U.S. forces has arrived, fatalities have fallen sharply. At press time, the toll for the month of July stood at 74, a decrease of 42 percent compared with May. That's the lowest fatality rate since last November.

When the surge was announced earlier this year, critics said adding more troops in one area would simply force insurgents to provoke violence in other areas. But according to an analysis by Pentagon officials, fatalities are down in July in all four of the most violent provinces of Iraq: Baghdad, Anbar, Salahaddin, and Diyala.

In Baghdad Province, for example, 27 Americans were killed as of July 24, down from 44 in May. In Diyala Province, six Americans were killed as of July 24, a decrease from 19 in May. Sunni-dominated Anbar Province to the west of Baghdad, where violence has been tamped down in part because Sunni sheiks have organized against Sunni extremism there, five American service members were killed as of July 24, down from 14 for the month of May. Salahaddin saw the same trend, where 12 were killed in May, six in July. The four provinces represent about 37 percent of the Iraqi population but nearly 80 percent of the violence that occurs in Iraq.

The toll from improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, has also decreased considerably in the last two months. As of July 24, 40 Americans had been killed in July, down from 95 in May.

Iraqis are also seeing a decrease in violence. The number of Iraqi security forces and civilian fatalities has declined since May as well, according to icasualties.org, a website that tracks such information. The site reports that there were 1,664 civilians and Iraqi security forces killed in July, down from 1,980 in May, but it notes that no such tallies are completely accurate and are probably much higher.

The reduction in violence doesn't appear to be the result of summer weather, when the intense heat might discourage insurgent attacks. According to an analysis by the Marine command in Anbar, violence trends upward from a low point in January, when it's

coldest, through summer to October for each of the last three years. This year, according to Marine Maj. Gen. Walter Gaskin, commander of Multi-national Force West, the violence in Anbar has trended downward instead.

All this may be illustrating what to some is a new reality in Iraq even if much of Washington has yet to acknowledge it, says Michael O'Hanlon, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, a Washington-based think tank.

Mr. O'Hanlon has been critical of the war and has remained skeptical of the current strategy. But on Monday, he coauthored an Op-Ed in The New York Times titled "A War We Might Just Win." In it, O'Hanlon says he is impressed with the improved security situation, the reasonably high morale of US troops, and the increasing competency of Iraqi forces. "We are finally getting somewhere in Iraq, at least in military terms," O'Hanlon wrote, along with Brookings colleague Kenneth Pollack. "As two analysts who have harshly criticized the Bush administration's miserable handling of Iraq, we were surprised by the gains we saw and the potential to produce not necessarily 'victory' but a sustainable stability that both we and the Iraqis could live with."

Military officials are heartened by decreases in American fatalities but are reluctant to characterize it as a turning point.

"My initial thought is this is what we thought would happen once we got control of the real key areas that are controlled by these terrorists," Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, the No. 2 American commander in Iraq, said on Thursday. "It's an initial positive sign, but I would argue I need a bit more time to make an assessment of whether it's a true trend or not."

In May, noting the high number of casualties among American forces, General Odierno said it was the result of taking the fight to the enemy, going into places like Diyala and Baquba to fight insurgents, and that he expected over time that the number of casualties would decrease, as it appears to have done now.

Odierno says he may need more time, but Congress is waiting for an assessment as early as next month. That's when Odierno's boss, Army Gen. David Petraeus, the top commander in Iraq, is expected to provide a comprehensive report of the security situation in Iraq. Military officials caution that General Petraeus's assessment may not make specific recommendations regarding a possible drawdown of the more than 155,000 US troops currently serving in Iraq.

"Petraeus is very, very cautious about how much success he is going to advertise," the senior uniformed official says. "The culminating point is when the hearts and minds finally tip" in Iraq.

[From the New York Times, July 30, 2007]

A WAR WE JUST MIGHT WIN

(By Michael E. O'Hanlon and Kenneth M. Pollack)

WASHINGTON.—Viewed from Iraq, where we just spent eight days meeting with American and Iraqi military and civilian personnel, the political debate in Washington is surreal. The Bush administration has over four years lost essentially all credibility. Yet now the administration's critics, in part as a result, seem unaware of the significant changes taking place.

Here is the most important thing Americans need to understand: We are finally getting somewhere in Iraq, at least in military terms. As two analysts who have harshly criticized the Bush administration's miserable handling of Iraq, we were surprised by the gains we saw and the potential to

produce not necessarily "victory" but a sustainable stability that both we and the Iraqis could live with.

After the furnace-like heat, the first thing you notice when you land in Baghdad is the morale of our troops. In previous trips to Iraq we often found American troops angry and frustrated—many sensed they had the wrong strategy, were using the wrong tactics and were risking their lives in pursuit of an approach that could not work.

Today, morale is high. The soldiers and marines told us they feel that they now have a superb commander in Gen. David Petraeus; they are confident in his strategy, they see real results, and they feel now they have the numbers needed to make a real difference.

Everywhere, Army and Marine units were focused on securing the Iraqi population, working with Iraqi security units, creating new political and economic arrangements at the local level and providing basic services—electricity, fuel, clean water and sanitation—to the people. Yet in each place, operations had been appropriately tailored to the specific needs of the community. As a result, civilian fatality rates are down roughly a third since the surge began—though they remain very high, underscoring how much more still needs to be done.

In Ramadi, for example, we talked with an outstanding Marine captain whose company was living in harmony in a complex with a (largely Sunni) Iraqi police company and a (largely Shiite) Iraqi Army unit. He and his men had built an Arab-style living room, here he met with the local Sunni sheiks—all formerly allies of Al Qaeda and other jihadist groups—who were now competing to secure his friendship.

In Baghdad's Ghazaliya neighborhood, which has seen some of the worst sectarian combat, we walked a street slowly coming back to life with stores and shoppers. The Sunni residents were unhappy with the nearby police checkpoint, where Shiite officers reportedly abused them, but they seemed genuinely happy with the American soldiers and a mostly Kurdish Iraqi Army company patrolling the street. The local Sunni militia even had agreed to confine itself to its compound once the Americans and Iraqi units arrived.

We traveled to the northern cities of Tal Afar and Mosul. This is an ethnically rich area, with large numbers of Sunni Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens. American troop levels in both cities now number only in the hundreds because the Iraqis have stepped up to the plate. Reliable police officers man the checkpoints in the cities, while Iraqi Army troops cover the countryside. A local mayor told us his greatest fear was an overly rapid American departure from Iraq. All across the country, the dependability of Iraqi security forces over the long term remains a major question mark.

But for now, things look much better than before. American advisers told us that many of the corrupt and sectarian Iraqi commanders who once infested the force have been removed. The American high command assesses that more than three-quarters of the Iraqi Army battalion commanders in Baghdad are now reliable partners (at least for as long as American forces remain in Iraq).

In addition, far more Iraqi units are well integrated in terms of ethnicity and religion. The Iraqi Army's highly effective Third Infantry Division started out as overwhelmingly Kurdish in 2005. Today, it is 45 percent Shiite, 28 percent Kurdish, and 27 percent Sunni Arab.

In the past, few Iraqi units could do more than provide a few "jundis" (soldiers) to put a thin Iraqi face on largely American operations. Today, in only a few sectors did we

find American commanders complaining that their Iraqi formations were useless—something that was the rule, not the exception, on a previous trip to Iraq in late 2005.

The additional American military formations brought in as part of the surge, General Petraeus's determination to hold areas until they are truly secure before redeploying units, and the increasing competence of the Iraqis has had another critical effect: no more whack-a-mole, with insurgents popping back up after the Americans leave.

In war, sometimes it's important to pick the right adversary, and in Iraq we seem to have done so. A major factor in the sudden change in American fortunes has been the outpouring of popular animus against Al Qaeda and other Salafist groups, as well as (to a lesser extent) against Moktada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army.

These groups have tried to impose Shariah law, brutalized average Iraqis to keep them in line, killed important local leaders and seized young women to marry off to their loyalists. The result has been that in the last six months Iraqis have begun to turn on the extremists and turn to the Americans for security and help. The most important and best-known example of this is in Anbar Province, which in less than six months has gone from the worst part of Iraq to the best (outside the Kurdish areas). Today the Sunni sheiks there are close to crippling Al Qaeda and its Salafist allies. Just a few months ago, American marines were fighting for every yard of Ramadi; last week we strolled down its streets without body armor.

Another surprise was how well the coalition's new Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams are working. Wherever we found a fully staffed team, we also found local Iraqi leaders and businessmen cooperating with it to revive the local economy and build new political structures. Although much more needs to be done to create jobs, a new emphasis on microloans and small-scale projects was having some success where the previous aid programs often built white elephants.

In some places where we have failed to provide the civilian manpower to fill out the reconstruction teams, the surge has still allowed the military to fashion its own advisory groups from battalion, brigade and division staffs. We talked to dozens of military officers who before the war had known little about governance or business but were now ably immersing themselves in projects to provide the average Iraqi with a decent life.

Outside Baghdad, one of the biggest factors in the progress so far has been the efforts to decentralize power to the provinces and local governments. But more must be done. For example, the Iraqi National Police, which are controlled by the Interior Ministry, remain mostly a disaster. In response, many towns and neighborhoods are standing up local police forces, which generally prove more effective, less corrupt and less sectarian. The coalition has to force the warlords in Baghdad to allow the creation of neutral security forces beyond their control.

In the end, the situation in Iraq remains grave. In particular, we still face huge hurdles on the political front. Iraqi politicians of all stripes continue to dawdle and maneuver for position against one another when major steps towards reconciliation—or at least accommodation—are needed. This cannot continue indefinitely. Otherwise, once we begin to downsize, important communities may not feel committed to the status quo, and Iraqi security forces may splinter along ethnic and religious lines.

How much longer should American troops keep fighting and dying to build a new Iraq while Iraqi leaders fail to do their part? And how much longer can we wear down our

forces in this mission? These haunting questions underscore the reality that the surge cannot go on forever. But there is enough good happening on the battlefields of Iraq today that Congress should plan on sustaining the effort at least into 2008.

Mr. ISAKSON. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, we all know and acknowledge that al-Qaida and other related terrorist groups are determined to strike at the U.S. homeland. But a precipitous U.S. withdrawal from Iraq would only serve to fuel that determination and, as a result, surrender Iraq to al-Qaida, which would directly threaten the security of the United States and its allies.

Yesterday, we had a visit from Henry Kissinger who warned us that such a precipitous withdrawal would be revisiting the nightmare of Vietnam, where our withdrawal there created genocide among those who had supported us and other innocent Southeast Asians. This time, however, al-Qaida would follow us back to America. Al-Qaida would use Iraq as a safe haven, as it once had in Afghanistan. Only this time with oil revenues, in addition to a safe haven, it would be well positioned and financed to launch further enhanced attacks against the United States. Yet we continue to hear from the other side calls for withdrawal, despite preliminary reports of progress resulting from the surge, as my colleague from Georgia has so eloquently explained.

We continue to hear calls for timelines that would embolden the morale of our enemies and dissuade the populace from cooperating with U.S. and Iraqi forces, and the latest and most recent development in the string of defeatism has come from the House majority whip. This past Monday in the Washington Post, he stated that a strongly positive report on progress in Iraq by General Petraeus would likely split Democrats in the House and impede his party's efforts to press for a timetable to end the war.

Now it appears some in the Democratic Party leadership are so invested in retreat and defeat politically that despite whatever the news is coming out of Iraq and regardless of the consequences, they are committed to defeat.

Why, I ask, is the majority focused not on our national security but on scoring political points? I guess we should pull out, cede victory for the terrorists in Iraq, in order to keep the Democrats united for the general elections in 2008.

What we, the Iraqi people, and all freedom-loving nations face is a fundamental threat from barbaric cowards misrepresenting the true nature of peaceful teachings of Islam. The terrorists of mufsidoon, as they should be called, are condemned evildoers distorting the Koran. They are not jihadists. Jihad is pursuing a moral superiority. These people who commit

these acts are not insurgents or jihadists. The clearer we define the true enemy, the easier it will be to defeat them.

What we have seen for some time now is encouraging signs this has, in fact, happened, coupled with the surge that is showing progress. Sunni sheiks in Al Anbar have been working with us to take back their neighborhoods and villages, fed up with the mufsidoon al-Qaida committing atrocities.

My colleague referred to the Sunday New York Times article. Two men who are strong opponents of the war in Iraq said, referring to al-Qaida and other Salafist groups, as well as Moktada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army:

These groups have tried to impose Shariah law, brutalized average Iraqis to keep them in line, killed important local leaders and seized young women to marry off to their loyalists. The result has been that in the last 6 months, Iraqis have begun to turn on the extremists and turn to the Americans for security and help. The most important and best-known example of this is in Anbar Province, which in less than 6 months has gone from the worst part of Iraq to the best. Today, the Sunni sheiks there are close to crippling Al Qaeda and its Salafist allies. Just a few months ago, American marines were fighting for every yard of Ramadi; last week we strolled down its streets without body armor.

I observed the same when my CODEL visited Iraq in early May. The authors said "there is enough good happening on the battlefields of Iraq today that Congress should plan on sustaining the effort at least until 2008."

So if two of the war's harshest, most longstanding critics admit we are making a difference, why can't the Democrats give victory a chance? Why can't they give millions of Iraqis a chance at freedom? Why can't they acknowledge the progress being made?

Pollack and O'Hanlon said that the soldiers and marines know they have a superb commander in General Petraeus.

... they are confident in his strategy, they see real results, and they feel now they have the numbers needed to make a real difference.

It is time my colleagues in the other party who claim to support the troops actually do so in both words and deeds. Ignoring the progress being made by our troops because it does not suit the political ends of some Democratic leaders is an egregious outrage. Advocating for a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq would be a rallying cry for al-Qaida and other mufsidoon all over the world. What are we to say to the millions of Iraqis who have sided with us in taking back their country, only to see them slaughtered systematically after we leave the job before it is finished?

Our words should inspire our troops and those who are working with us. Rest assured our soldiers and marines are listening. A recent speech by Marine Corps Commandant Conway underscores the point:

I sat this week and listened to a United States Senator who criticized the U.S. effort

in Iraq as being involved in an Iraqi civil war while ignoring the real fight against terrorism that was taking place in Afghanistan.

With due respect to the Senator, I would offer that he is wrong on two counts. The fact is that there is no civil war taking place in Iraq by any reasonable metric. There is certainly sectarian strife, but even that is on the declining scale over the past six months. Ironically, this strife was brought about and inflamed by the very terrorists some claim do not exist in Iraq. The sectarian strife is a tactic aimed at creating chaos with little risk to the instigator while it ties down coalition forces.

Yet, Mr. President, the retreat-and-defeat crowd, despite encouraging signs the surge is working, despite the fact this new strategy has only been in place fully for just a couple of months, and despite the fact that the Democrats have failed to offer any constructive alternatives, other than the ones that would cede defeat, continue to push down that line.

It is a huge disappointment to me, to others, to those who support our troops and the efforts to protect our homeland from the al-Qaida attacks that would surely follow a precipitous withdrawal. It is a huge disappointment that this debate is not about how we can achieve victory but how quickly we can declare defeat. This has become a political debate. The focus of our national security has been sidetracked. As I have said time and time again, we should debate legislation which provides our troops with a clear path to victory, a victory which, sadly, many in this body are ready to award to al-Qaida and mufsidoon all over the world without ever having given the surge a chance.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for 7 minutes.

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

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I will say to my good friend from Missouri that was a well-done presentation. I know how important this topic is to him because of his family's commitment to our military, and he, like many other people in this country, definitely has a vested interest in the outcome in Iraq in terms of family members.

The point I would like to make this morning, to build on this theme, is that I passionately believe the outcome in Iraq will not be a neutral event in terms of the overall war on terror, that success in Iraq will not be confined to Iraq in terms of winning the war on terror, and a defeat in Iraq certainly will not be confined to Iraq. It will spill over and empower extremists in the region and throughout the world.

The reason I say that is this: Who is the enemy in Iraq? Is this really a civil war? Certainly there are aspects of sectarian violence and people trying to seize political power through militia groups and the use of violence, trying to destroy this democracy and win the day to control Iraq. There are Shia and Sunni groups trying to do that. But the vast majority of Iraqis want to go a different way. They want to live together and try to find some way to rec-

oncile their past differences and not resort to the use of the gun. I do believe there is some hope this will happen—and not just blind hope but realistic progress in Iraq that can be seen if you are willing to look.

The challenges are real. The Iraqi central government has failed on many fronts to reconcile the country politically. But, as my colleagues have indicated, the surge, the additional combat power that started in February and has been in place now for about 3 or 4 weeks, has made a dramatic difference in certain parts of Iraq.

Mr. O'Hanlon and Mr. Pollack's article has been often mentioned by Republicans, and they have been critics of the war, but I would just like to say to them, if they happen to be listening: I appreciate your willingness to come back and report progress, and I also understand what you are telling us in your article, that we are a long way from having it right in Iraq and there are many challenges left. The political front has been stagnant, but the military front has moved forward in a very substantial way.

The surge, for me, is not so much that we have moved al-Qaida out of Anbar but that the people in Anbar, given a choice, have rejected al-Qaida. The ability to make that choice was provided by the additional combat power coming from the surge. An offensive strategy is now in place, and it has replaced a defensive strategy. The old strategy of training the Iraqi police and military and hiding behind walls simply wasn't working. The new strategy of going out in the communities and living with the Iraqi police and army is paying dividends.

Anbar truly has changed in a phenomenal way, as Senator BOND said. You can go to Ramadi now—someplace you couldn't go a few months ago. Again, the Iraqi Sunni residents of Anbar tasted al-Qaida's lifestyle, had an experience in terms of what al-Qaida would impose upon their families, and said: No, thank you. And along comes American forces to help them reinforce that choice.

The biggest news in Anbar is that 12,000 people joined the local police force in 2007, where there were only 1,000 in 2006. So that means when we do leave—and it is all of our goal to withdraw from Iraq—the goal should be to withdraw with honor and security, and honor means you leave the country without those who helped you fight al-Qaida and other extremists getting slaughtered. I don't think we could leave that country with much honor if we left in a way that allowed those who bravely stepped out and embraced moderation to be killed by the extremists. From a security perspective, it is important that we leave Iraq in a stable situation and that the problems there do not spill over to the other parts of the region and the world at large.

Now, whom are we fighting? There are sectarian conflicts. There are power struggles to regain control of Iraq. That is part of the enemy. Al-Qaida is part of the enemy. And al-

Qaida is really not limited in controlling Iraq. It is not their goal to take over central Baghdad and run Iraq; their goal, in my opinion, is to come into Iraq and make sure this attempt at moderation and democracy fails.

Is there a connection between al-Qaida in Iraq and bin Laden and his organization? About a week ago, President Bush came to Charleston, SC, and spoke at Charleston's Air Force Base. He made a very logical, reasoned case that there is a deep connection between al-Qaida in Iraq and the bin Laden infrastructure. To those who say that al-Qaida in Iraq is really a separate organization with a separate agenda, I think you are not understanding who the major players are and what their agenda includes.

No. 1, their agenda is to defeat us in Iraq and drive America out and be able to claim to the rest of the world that they beat us. If you don't believe me, ask Bin Laden or look at what bin Laden says. Bin Laden claimed, "The Third World war is raging in Iraq." Osama Bin Laden says, "The war is for you or for us to win. If we win it, it means your defeat and your disgrace forever."

Well, I think he understands the consequences of a victory by al-Qaida. He also understands the consequences of a defeat by America. The question I have is, Do we understand that? Do we understand what would happen to this country and all forces of moderation in the Mideast and throughout the world if it were perceived that al-Qaida in Iraq was able to drive the United States out of that country and leave it to the warlords of terrorism?

Who is al-Qaida in Iraq? The founder of al-Qaida in Iraq was not an Iraqi, it was a Jordanian—al-Zarqawi. He was a Jordanian terrorist. Before 9/11, he ran a terrorist camp in Afghanistan. After joining Osama bin Laden, he left Afghanistan, after the fall of the Taliban, and went to Iraq. Zarqawi and his terrorist group formally joined bin Laden, pledging allegiance to Osama bin Laden, and promised to follow his orders in jihad. Soon after, bin Laden publicly declared that Zarqawi was the prince of al-Qaida in Iraq and instructed terrorists in Iraq to listen to him and obey him. Now, to me, that is a pretty serious connection.

Beyond Zarqawi, who was from Jordan, bin Laden sent an Egyptian, who was a member of al-Qaida's international infrastructure, to provide support to Zarqawi and leadership. And the President gave a laundry list of international terrorists tied to bin Laden who migrated to Iraq to build up al-Qaida in Iraq. They have the same agenda. The agenda is to defeat moderation where you find it, to try to control as much of the Mideast as possible. And their agenda doesn't just include Iraq. The Gulf States are next and after that Israel, and always us.

Now, that is not what I am saying; that is what they say. So I think the President made a very persuasive case that the infrastructure of al-Qaida in Iraq is very much tied to the bin Laden organization. If you don't believe that, come down and let's have a debate about it.

Who else is our enemy in Iraq? Iran. This body passed unanimously a resolution authored by Senator LIEBERMAN during the Defense authorization debate, and part of that resolution was a laundry list of activity by Iran, particularly the Quds Force, part of the Revolutionary Guard, in terms of trying to kill Americans in Iraq and destabilize the efforts of building a democracy in Iraq. On February 11, 2007, the U.S. military held a briefing in Baghdad at which its representatives stated that at least 170 members of the U.S. Armed Forces have been killed and at least 620 wounded by weapons tied to Iran.

This resolution which we passed was a damning indictment of Iran's involvement in Iraq about training, providing funds, providing weaponry, and bringing Hezbollah agents from Lebanon into Iraq to try to assist extremist groups whose goal it is to kill Americans and to destabilize this effort of democracy.

Now, why does al-Qaida come to Iraq? I said before that their biggest nightmare is a moderate form of government where Sunnis and Shias and Kurds and all different groups could live together, accepting their differences, where a woman could have a say about her children by being able to run for office and vote and have a strong voice in society. That is their worst nightmare.

Whether we should have gone to Iraq or not is a historical debate. We have made plenty of mistakes after the fall of Baghdad. But the biggest mistake would be not to recognize that Iraq is part of a global struggle. There are sectarian conflicts in Iraq; I acknowledge that. There has been a major failure of political reconciliation; I acknowledge that. The old strategy was not working; I acknowledged that 2 or 3 years ago. The new strategy is providing dividends in terms of defeating al-Qaida in Iraq. The Iraqi people in the Sunni areas have turned against al-Qaida in Iraq. That is good news. Political reconciliation is occurring at the local provincial level. I hope it works its way up.

Another aspect of Iraq, to me, which is undeniable—and I understand the challenges, and I think I see the successes for what they are—is that the Iranian Government's involvement in Iraq is major. It is substantial. It is designed to break our will. Their efforts include killing our troops, and they are there to make sure this experiment in democracy fails because Iran's worst nightmare is to have a functioning democracy on their border.

So this is part of a global struggle, and the outcome will create momen-

tum one way or the other. I hope the outcome will be a success for moderation and a defeat of extremism.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. All time has expired. Morning business is closed.

SMALL BUSINESS TAX RELIEF ACT OF 2007

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 976, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 976) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax relief for small businesses, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Baucus amendment No. 2530, in the nature of a substitute.

Grassley (for Ensign) amendment No. 2538 (to amendment No. 2530), to amend the Internal Revenue Service Code of 1986 to create a Disease Prevention and Treatment Research Trust Fund.

Bunning amendment No. 2547 (to amendment No. 2530), to eliminate the exception for certain States to cover children under SCHIP whose income exceeds 300 percent of the Federal poverty level.

Dorgan amendment No. 2534 (to amendment No. 2530), to revise and extend the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.

Gregg amendment No. 2587 (to amendment No. 2530), to limit the matching rate for coverage other than for low-income children or pregnant women covered through a waiver and to prohibit any new waivers for coverage of adults other than pregnant women.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there is now 30 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote in relation to amendment No. 2538.

Who yields time? The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, the bill before us today would reauthorize SCHIP for 5 years with a \$35 billion expansion in spending. But because of the way the budget gimmicks were worked in this bill, it is actually an expansion of somewhere around \$110 billion.

This expansion, or at least part of it, is going to be funded by an increase in the Federal tobacco tax by 61 cents per pack and up to \$10 per cigar. The problem with the funding mechanism in this bill, the way I see it, is that for the funding to still be there, we actually need to encourage people to smoke. Today, in our health care system, smokers contribute to a lot of diseases and this imposes large costs. In the future, as we raise the price of tobacco, fewer people smoking will mean less revenue. The proposal to fund the SCHIP expansion will yield diminishing returns. In the future, the tobacco tax will not adequately pay for the spending that is provided for in this bill.

This bill greatly increases dependency on the Federal Government and the dependency of the Federal Government on this tobacco tax revenue. The expansions included in this bill will have little bang for the buck in terms of reducing the ranks of the uninsured. As more money is poured into expanding SCHIP, less of the new funds will go to providing coverage to low-income children who currently go without coverage. SCHIP expansion will only serve to coax individuals and families out of the private insurance market and into Government coverage.

Undermining private health insurance coverage by creating more Government dependence is not an effective way to address shortfalls in coverage. We should have more of a comprehensive approach. This approach should include fiscal discipline, not more taxes and higher spending. We should be working to strengthen private sector health insurance options and increase parental choice and responsibility.

My amendment, however, will not address taking a more comprehensive approach to coverage. We will have other amendments during this debate that will address more of a comprehensive approach to insurance coverage.

I strongly believe in the role of Federal Government plays in promoting basic research. Some have noted that an increase in the tobacco tax should be used to fund the costs that tobacco imposes on our society. I agree with that. My amendment would establish a trust fund that will be known as the Disease Prevention and Treatment Research Trust Fund. The revenue from increased tobacco tax rates in the underlying bill will be transferred to this trust fund. From there, the dollars will be made available to fund research on diseases that are often associated with tobacco use.

I also believe the chronic underfunding of research in areas such as pediatric cancer need to be addressed, so I have expanded the permissible use of these funds to cover research on other diseases as well. I urge my colleagues to support my amendment to help discover new knowledge and treatments that improve and save lives.

Our current health care system is a sick care system. We do not spend nearly as much money on prevention as we do on getting people healthy once they are sick. This trust fund will fund research into areas to keep people healthy, to make sure we are spending money on disease research that actually keeps people out of hospitals, that keeps people as healthy as possible for as long as possible throughout their lives. I think this is a better use of taxpayers' dollars, especially when we are going to be raising those taxes on people who smoke. Let's use that money to fund disease research instead of taking people from the private health market onto the Government-funded health market.

I reserve the remainder of my time.