

need to complete this appropriations bill this week, because as soon as we complete the Defense authorization bill, we need to move to Defense Appropriations. That is what we have to complete before the end of the work period.

There are other things we have to do. We have to have some extension or some agreement on what we are going to do with the farm bill. We have SCHIP that we need to work on prior to the end of this month. So we have a tremendous amount of work to do. Last week was a very productive week. We had to work a couple of late nights, but it was worth it. So that should set us up for this week and give us an idea of what we are going to do next week.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would ask one question of my good friend, the majority leader. I didn't hear him indicate whether—and maybe he doesn't know yet—the Iraq debate will occur in the context of the DOD authorization bill or separate from that.

Mr. REID. I am going to try to work with the minority leader to see what we can work out as to whether we want to have the Iraq votes intertwined with Defense authorization or whether we do not. I have Members telling me on the Defense authorization bill that they are going to offer an amendment to close Guantanamo and offer habeas corpus, so it is going to be a contested piece of legislation. We have to complete that.

There are some who believe we would be better off having the Iraq matters separate and apart from Defense authorization. I have to work that out first with Senators LEVIN and MCCAIN. My initial report from them is that they would rather have them separate, but I will work with the minority leader and we will try to finish deciding what we are going to do by Wednesday or Thursday of this week.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I am going to make some remarks in my leader time. I would ask the Chair if this is the appropriate time to do that.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

The Republican leader.

THE PETRAEUS PLAN

Mr. McCONNELL. When we opened this session in January, the situation in Iraq appeared to be unraveling. Sectarian violence had sharply increased, particularly in Baghdad, since the bombing of the Golden Mosque. Foreign fighters were taking advantage of this fighting to inflame it even more. And two options emerged: withdraw our forces and abandon this fledgling democracy to al-Qaida and the other terrorists, or confront them directly, in the streets and neighborhoods where they lived.

We needed a new and realistic strategy to succeed, and we got one. The President proposed, and a Democratic-led Senate unanimously confirmed, Gen David Petraeus on January 26 to carry out a new plan aimed at protecting the population in and around Baghdad, beating back al-Qaida, and training Iraqi forces to defend Iraq on their own. The new plan would take time and patience. We had no guarantees it would work. But General Petraeus assured us of one thing. In testimony delivered just before his Senate confirmation, he said this:

I will provide Multinational Force Iraq the best leadership and direction I can muster; I will work to ensure unity of effort with the ambassador and our Iraqi and coalition partners; and I will provide my bosses and you with forthright, professional military advice with respect to the missions given to Multinational Force Iraq and the situation on the ground.

That was General Petraeus.

And if he should determine that this new strategy cannot succeed, the general said he would provide such an assessment—a promise of candor.

Tomorrow, General Petraeus will give the Senate the forthright advice he promised, a first-hand account by the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq on the progress of their mission. And then we, the men and women who unanimously confirmed him for that mission, will respond accordingly. This briefing will take place 6 years to the day after the attacks of 9/11—when nearly 3,000 innocent people were killed in unprovoked attacks; more than in another sneak attack some 60 years earlier at Pearl Harbor.

Over those 6 years, General Petraeus has compiled an astounding record of service. He has spent 4 of them deployed away from home and away from his family, with nearly 3 years service in Iraq. Let me say that again: 3 years of service in Iraq.

He led the 101st Airborne with distinction in northern Iraq early in the fight. Later he improved the way we trained Iraqi security forces after early mistakes by the Coalition Provisional Authority. And he served as commander of the U.S. Army's Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, where he developed the Army's doctrine on counterinsurgency—he literally wrote the book.

He has proven his devotion to this country. His integrity is above reproach. And any suggestion to the contrary is totally absurd and demonstrably untrue.

And so I resent the comments of those who have sat comfortably in their air-conditioned offices, thousands of miles away from the firefights and the roadside bombs, and tried their Washington best in recent days to impugn the general's good name.

The Democratic majority sent him into battle by a unanimous vote, funded his mission, and asked him to report back on progress. And when he returns, is he greeted with the respect and appreciation his service deserves? No. He

is attacked again, at home, by some of the very Democratic Senators who confirmed him.

They are following the lead of the left-wing groups that placed a full-page ad in today's New York Times, questioning the character—questioning the character—of a four-star general who has the respect and admiration of the more than 150,000 brave men and women serving under his command. These childish tactics are an insult to everyone fighting for our freedom in Iraq, and they should be condemned. I am waiting for someone on the other side to condemn this ad in the New York Times today—the condemnation it richly deserves.

Republicans have tried to maintain a level of civility in this debate. We have let most of the rhetorical excesses of the other side slide, knowing that tempers are bound to flare in this charged environment. But the effort to discredit General Petraeus personally over the past few days is completely and totally out of bounds. It needs to be recognized as such, and it needs to end—right now.

The early effort to undermine his mission was troubling enough. Scarcely had a fraction of the additional soldiers or marines landed in Iraq before we started hearing the voices of defeat. Amazingly, some Democrats who had called for a surge before January, would then label the policy a failure 2 full months before it fully began. Others said the war was lost even as these soldiers and marines were being sent into battle.

General Petraeus was asked to carry out a new plan, and it would be a challenge. But it was guaranteed to fail too if armchair generals in Washington were allowed to dictate the battle plan from here. And with the help of a single courageous Independent, Republicans circled around a simple principle: tactics would be dictated by conditions on the ground, not the political thermometer. Before rushing to legislative judgment, we would listen closely to our commanders.

We held our ground. Despite the best efforts of some of our colleagues on the other side, we gave our commanders what they needed to carry out their plan. Not least of all we gave them hope that they'd have the time and the funding to do their work.

As the summer dragged on here in Washington, leftist groups continued to insist on an arbitrary withdrawal date. And when they failed to get their wish in Congress, they followed Republicans home over the August recess, pouring money into misleading political ads and busing in protesters. This was the other surge, a surge aimed at intimidating Republicans who supported the Petraeus Plan.

These efforts were misguided—and of course they failed.

They failed because Americans will always choose the hopeful path, when they see one in view. And while the defeatists were pouring out of their buses

with their coffee and their doughnuts last month, thousands of tough, determined American soldiers and marines were spilling out into Iraqi cities and villages finding a way to win this fight. And the news that started to trickle back from those villages and towns was this: after a long season of setbacks, there is reason for hope.

The first major combat operation of the surge began less than 3 months ago on June 15. And the early reports of our commanders in the field confirm some truly remarkable gains. Our second in command, GEN Raymond Odierno, has told us that total attacks are at the lowest level since last August, that attacks against civilians are at a 6-month low; civilian murders in Baghdad are down to their lowest point since just before the bombing of the Golden Mosque; and that he sees a new aggressiveness in Iraqi soldiers, and discipline and pride.

This report mirrored others that we have heard, from journalists and independent analysts, about the strong morale of U.S. troops. One of those reports came in late July. After spending 8 days with American and Iraqi military and civilian personnel, two prominent early critics of the war at the left-leaning Brookings Institution issued a call to all critics: stop, look, listen.

They said morale among U.S. troops is high, that troops are confident in their commander, that they see results, and that they believe they have the numbers to make a difference. And then they told us what many others have confirmed: that Iraqis themselves are turning on the extremists, that Al Anbar, once thought to be lost to al-Qaida, has gone in 6 months from being the worst place in Iraq to the best. The marines and soldiers fighting in Anbar have been working with the local tribes and sheiks for years to produce this result, but their efforts are beginning to show remarkable results.

The authors of this report didn't sugarcoat the hard realities in Iraq. The obstacles are enormous. And they admitted what all of us, including General Petraeus, have long known and repeatedly said: that we can't stay in Iraq indefinitely at current troop levels. But, they concluded, we are finally getting somewhere militarily. And it would be foolish to turn back now.

We have heard of stirring scenes in recent weeks: hundreds of thousands of Iraqi pilgrims marching to the Kadhimiyah Shrine in Baghdad in peace, protected by the Iraqi security forces. Political leaders from across the ethnic divides who once stood by silently as terrorists bombed neighborhoods and mosques now joining together to condemn them. Arabs, Kurds, Sunnis, Shias, and Christians working together in Ninevah to help the victims of the recent bombing there.

Americans like what they have heard. Recent polls suggest that an increasing number of Americans now think we have a chance of winning. They have put their trust in our commanders and the troops in the field, and they trust that we will respect

their gains and listen to their general, without prejudice, when he reports back to us this week. The early successes of the Petraeus Plan give America hope that we can bring about ample stability to Iraq, and it also gives us real hope that we can start to bring our troops back, not in retreat but with full honor and pride.

None of us wants the troops to stay in Iraq any longer than it takes to make it a stable democracy capable of defending itself. But Republicans have insisted that we let the uniformed generals advise us when that time comes, not armchair generals who are more focused on the polls than on a successful mission.

General Petraeus has already hinted that a reduction in troop levels might be possible at or near the end of the year. This is the most welcome news yet, and if he recommends it tomorrow, I assure you Republicans will be ready to draft the legislation supporting that request.

We hope that Democrats who have signaled a willingness to cooperate on Iraq, after 8 months of insisting on arbitrary withdrawal dates and premature troop reductions, join us in acknowledging that our generals know better than we do what it takes to win this war.

Again, none of us wants the troops in harm's way a minute longer than necessary. But while there is a chance for hope, we will not retreat. We know the stakes if we leave Iraq to terrorists: slaughter on an unimaginable scale, the abandonment of an entire nation to vicious killers who would use it as a staging ground for future acts of violence against Americans, an open field for Iran, and the entire world murmuring that America doesn't have the patience or the stomach or the grit to win.

Some on the other side of the aisle sent General Petraeus to Iraq, then tried to control the mission. When that failed, they tried to define the mission as a failure. And in a last-minute burst of defeatism, they have tried to discredit the man they sent to carry that mission out. No wonder a recent poll showed that only 3 percent of Americans think the Democratic Congress is doing a good job handling the war.

Let's listen to General Petraeus when he gets here, really listen. I know that is hard for Senators, but let's listen and respond accordingly. At some point we will have to draw down our forces, and we won't leave perfection in our wake. We know we will have to maintain a long-term presence in Iraq and the region. We must deter Iran, we must combat al-Qaida, and we cannot countenance terrorist sanctuaries.

But crafting a wise policy for the region over the long term will be impossible in the current partisan climate. Let's listen to the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, the senior Senator from Indiana, who said we will only be able to craft a sustainable bipartisan strategy in Iraq together.

Eight months ago, the situation in Iraq was unraveling. It remains dif-

ficult and dangerous. But there is hope and proof, not only of success, not only of bottom-up political progress on the ground, but for the reduction in troops that all of us want. And if General Petraeus says this is warranted, then we will act, together, and move forward with new confidence that we can craft a sensible policy for protecting our interests not only in Iraq but in the broader Persian Gulf.

Let's allow this man to speak tomorrow and listen to him without prejudice.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF WILLIAM LINDSAY OSTEEN, JR., TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA

NOMINATION OF MARTIN KARL REIDINGER, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA

NOMINATION OF JANIS LYNN SAMMARTINO, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations en bloc, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of William Lindsay Osteen, Jr., of North Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of North Carolina; Martin Karl Reidinger, of North Carolina, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of North Carolina; and Janis Lynn Sammartino, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be 60 minutes of debate equally divided between the Senator from Vermont and the Senator from Pennsylvania.

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I understand the Senator from North Carolina is on the floor and wishes to speak. Obviously, I will yield her more time if she wants, but I ask unanimous consent that she be yielded 10 minutes out of the time reserved for the distinguished senior Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. SPECTER.

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