

Maj. Gen. William C. Caldwell said Wednesday. "This is going to take many months, not weeks, but the indicators are all very positive right now."

Figures alone won't tell the story. In Vietnam, generals kept pointing to enemy body counts to promote a picture of success even when many U.S. soldiers and civilian officials realized the effort was doomed.

True success will be when Iraqis themselves begin to feel safe and gain confidence in their government and security forces. Only then can the economy, long on its heels and with unemployment estimated between 25 and 40 percent, rebound and start providing jobs and a future for Baghdad's people.

A long-term solution also must deal with the militias that sprang up after the ouster of Saddam Hussein.

Much of the relative calm may be due to a decision by Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr to remove his armed militiamen, known as the Mahdi Army, from the streets. Al-Maliki warned the young cleric that he could not protect them from the Americans during the offensive.

U.S. troops rolled into the Mahdi stronghold of Sadr City on March 4 without firing a shot—a radical change from street battles there in 2004.

Some Mahdi Army fighters may have left the city. But Iraqis who live in Shiite neighborhoods say many others are still around, collecting protection money from shopkeepers and keeping tabs on people—albeit without their guns.

When American patrols pass by, Mahdi members step into shops or disappear into crowds until the U.S. troops are gone. Sunni militants remain in some areas of the city too, although last year's sectarian blood-letting drove many Sunnis from their traditional neighborhoods, depriving extremists of a support network.

Sunni militants, meanwhile, are believed to have withdrawn to surrounding areas such as Diyala province where they have safe haven. The U.S. command sent an extra 700 soldiers Tuesday to protect the highways leading into the capital from there.

If militants from both sects are indeed lying low, that suggests they may have adopted a strategy of waiting until the security operation is over, then reemerging to fight each other for control of the capital.

Conscious of that possibility, new U.S. commander Gen. David Petraeus and other senior generals avoid setting a date for when the operation would end. They insist the extra troops will stay as long as they are needed.

And they say the military will continue to track down key militia and insurgent figures, in hopes of crippling the leadership of insurgent groups before they attempt to reemerge.

"You generally think that if you're going to achieve (the desired results), that it would need to be sustained certainly for some time well beyond summer," Petraeus told reporters last week.

The No. 2 commander in Iraq, Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, has recommended that the buildup stretch longer, into the early months of 2008—if Congress will provide the money.

But positive trends in Iraq have proven hard to sustain. Hopes for reconciliation are quickly shattered. There have been a series of failed security initiatives. With so many uncertainties, public opinion appears mixed.

"We gain nothing from this government. No change," said Abu Zeinab, a Shiite father of two in Baghdad's Hurriyah district. "Today is like yesterday. What is the difference?"

In eastern Baghdad, one homeowner whose house was seized by the family of a Shiite

militiaman gained enough confidence to tell them to leave or he would turn them in to the Americans—unthinkable only a few weeks ago.

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

THE IRAQ RESOLUTIONS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I have not had a whole lot to say in the Senate about the process, the various proposals, and even the substance of the Iraq resolutions. But it obviously is a very troublesome issue for me.

One of my concerns is the process. How bad could we possibly look as an institution? We can't come to an agreement on how to have a full debate and votes. Everybody says we will agree to this but not that, and it goes back and forth. For the life of me, I cannot understand why we cannot have some clear identification of some different approaches to this issue and have debate and vote on them.

The majority leader has to understand he cannot dictate what amendments the Republicans are going to offer and the substance of those amendments or resolutions, if you will, any more than we can dictate that to the Democrats. It has to be a fair process. I think that can be worked out. I know our leaders are talking—and I wish them the best—so that we can have debate and a vote on different approaches and move on to other issues.

My second problem is, how many iterations is this going to go through? I remind my colleagues that the election is over. It was last year. All we have been doing in the Senate is political partisan positioning, all sound and fury, achieving nothing. What is the score in the Senate? 0 to 0. Democrats haven't gotten anything done. Not one bill of any substance that we have passed has been signed into law, except a continuing resolution, which we acknowledged had to be done to keep the Government operating and, frankly, because we didn't do our work like we should have on that issue last year. That is all. It is all about positioning.

There is one other score that is the worst of all: Democrats, 0; Republicans, 0; American people, 0. We have to figure out a way to quit finding what we can disagree about and find some things we can work together on for the good of the people.

Regarding this Iraq issue, on the one hand, we say we want to succeed. On the other hand, you have the out-of-Iraq caucus saying get out of there, set deadlines, and withdraw the troops. We say we are giving General Petraeus our total confidence with a unanimous approval in confirmation. He is there trying to get the violence calmed down and to do a better job and get an opportunity for their Government to do what it needs to do, have economic development. So while we are saying: Congratulations, we all vote for you and wish you will succeed, we are over

here doing things that could potentially undermine his ability to get them done.

You might say: Oh, well, that is not really what is at stake with the Iraq resolutions. Remember, to show you what positioning is going on, today, let's say we come to the conclusion that we are going to have two or three different votes and we will finish at some point this afternoon on the latest iteration of the Reid positions and we will move on to the budget. Well, the problem with that is we have already been told this will be back on the supplemental appropriations—the emergency appropriations to fund the needs of our men and women in uniform. We are being told: By the way, we are going to put this restrictive language on the funding resolution. So we are going to revisit this issue the week after next.

I think what we are doing is the worst of all worlds. We have had non-binding resolutions to express the sense of the Senate, which is a misnomer in itself. Then, now we finally come to what would be statutory language in a joint resolution by Senator REID, which has deadlines and begins a process of Congress micromanaging a war.

We have tried it before and it didn't work, or it led to what some people consider a disaster. For us to state some opinions is one thing, but it has gone beyond that now. This is going to have an effect. I don't think there is a lot of language or a lot we can do that can positively affect what is going on in Iraq right now, but there is a lot we can do that will negatively affect it.

So I think to start setting deadlines and having the Congress trying to micromanage what is going on in Baghdad—we cannot even manage the process. How are we going to manage a war? Even the New York Times—and I don't usually quote them because most of the time I disagree with everything they have to say—is raising questions about the different resolutions and what would be the effect of what we are trying to do in the Congress about Iraq.

The Economist, I think the world's most respected magazine, said there is actually progress being made. General Petraeus is doing some things that have made a difference. Maliki and the Government there are beginning to make some decisions. We say meet your benchmarks, but as progress is being made, we say: If you don't do it like we have outlined, we are going to begin to just withdraw.

Mr. President, I wish my colleagues—all of us on both sides of the aisle—would think seriously about what we are doing in Iraq.

Then also, of course, we are going to go to the budget resolution next week. I have been through a lot of budget battles. Again, we are going to fuss and we are going to fight and we are going to have lots of amendments and we will have a vote-arama, which is the worst exhibition imaginable. We will vote on

25 amendments in a row probably every 3 minutes and have no idea what we are voting on. We will finish it up, and what effect does it have? None. The President doesn't sign it. We treat our own budgets about the same as we treat the President's budgets: We ignore them. We trash them a while and then throw them out in the street and do what we want to do.

I do think the budget is going to be the beginning of an opportunity for the American people to have buyer's remorse about what they have done with the Congress. This is going to be sort of a typical budget debate. The headline again in the New York Times is: "Senate Democrats offer spending plan but no way to pay for it."

I think in theory you can say Republicans always want to cut taxes, and they don't want to worry a whole lot about the effect that has on the deficit, although I believe if we cut taxes in the right way, we get more revenue.

I also think we all better take a look at what has been the effects of our tax policy and our budgets on the economy. The economy is good. Do we have some problems in the energy area and health care? Yes. We ought to do something about those issues. But overall, we have had economic growth. Revenues are pouring in.

So what is the budget I am looking at going to do? I think Senator CONRAD is a very serious chairman of the Budget Committee. I know he would like to do more than he is going to be able to do. I know he would like to do entitlement reform. We know it has to come. We will not belly up to that bar this year or next year. Maybe something will occur and we will do it in 2009.

This is going to be a budget where there is more domestic spending, less defense spending, and tax increases. That is what is going to happen. That is what always happens. We may not be a whole lot more responsible with a Republican budget, but this is your basic Democratic budget, and we are going to see it next week. We are going to describe it as one of smoke and mirrors. It assumes the tax cuts are going to be extended into the future, but it doesn't come up with any way to pay for them. Under the new rules, we are going to have pay-fors. If you increase spending, you are going to have to pay for it, or if you have tax cuts, you are going to have to pay for them, but it doesn't say how that is going to occur.

I do think we are at a critical juncture. We have gone through the opening, trying to get used to how we run the institution with new management. We haven't done it well. I am going to mark it off as the early phases of a new Congress and feeling our way forward. But when we get through positioning, I hope we are going to find a way to do some things together. We should have immigration reform. We need it. I know "comprehensive immigration reform" has gotten to be a dirty word, but I do think we have to deal with it in a broad way. It has to deal with

legal immigration, illegal immigration, and we are going to have to have a temporary worker program. We have to find some way for people to have a pathway to citizenship.

We have to address health care in America. Health care has become so expensive and, in many cases, not accessible. Why can't we work together on that issue?

Energy—the energy situation in America is a national security risk and an economic risk. Some people say: Oh, we can fix it by raising mileage standards for automobiles, CAFE standards. Some of us—I am in that group—think we don't have to produce less or get along with not having more oil and gas and nuclear power and everything else. I think we can have more of everything. Let's see if we can't find a way to come together and maybe do both in a responsible way.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk about these issues this morning. I hope we can come to an agreement on how to proceed on Iraq, and I hope we can finish it by sundown tonight and then move on to the obligatory vote on the budget, which will be a waste of time, next week, and then maybe we can get serious about what we do in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OBAMA). The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, what is the floor situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in a period for morning business. Democrats control the next 30 minutes.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I thank the Chair. Mr. President, I yield myself approximately 10 minutes.

First, I wish to respond for a few minutes to my colleague, the Senator from Mississippi, the Republican whip. We have been in session less than 70 days. We have already been spending more time on legislation than the Congress led by the other party last year. Last year, we were in session less time than the Maryland General Assembly. We only voted 108 days.

Now we have been in session 70 days. We have had a robust work schedule. Our colleagues in the House have passed significant legislation. What takes them 1 day takes us 2 weeks. It takes us 2 weeks not only because parliamentarily and constitutionally we are the more deliberative body, but at the same time it has been the obstructionist tactics of the other party that has prevented us from being able to move our legislation.

Nevertheless, thanks to the determination of our majority leader, the Senator from Nevada, Mr. REID, we have been able to pass ethics reform. The American people wanted us to clean up our own act before we cleaned up Government and, man, have the Republicans left us a lot to clean up: the Walter Reed scandal, the Attorney General scandal, the national security letter scandal—scandal after scandal after scandal. We came saying we

weren't going to be seeking investigations, but now their reckless incompetency is forcing us to do that.

Then we pushed to implement the 9/11 Commission recommendations. It has been 5½ years since the dastardly attack on the World Trade Center, and it has taken us forever to implement these recommendations.

So when the other party criticizes us for not doing the people's business, maybe if they get out of the way with their obstructionist tactics and let us move ahead with an agenda that is bipartisan, we can get the job done.

Too often, when all is said and done within the Senate, more gets said than gets done. So before people throw rocks, remember those who live in a glass house might end up being shattered to bits themselves.

Let us do our work. Every time we turn around, HARRY REID has to file another cloture motion. Why? Because they threaten filibuster. So, hello, don't criticize us.

IRAQ

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, let's get on with this micromanaging the war business. Maybe if the administration was micromanaging the war, we wouldn't be here today. They said there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Maybe if they had micromanaged the intelligence community, we wouldn't even have gone into Iraq in the first place.

No. 2, they said, We are ready to go. If Mr. Rumsfeld had micromanaged the U.S. military, maybe we would have had enough troops. Maybe if they had micromanaged the war, they would have had enough body armor. Maybe if they had micromanaged the system, we wouldn't have the scandal at Walter Reed. Maybe if they had micromanaged, we wouldn't have this horrific backlog at VA. They are the ones who should have been micromanaging the war, and if they can't do it, they need to get out of the way and let us pass our resolution.

The distinguished whip from the other party said he wants us to finish by sundown. We would like to sunset the war. That is what we would like to do. It is time for our troops to come home, and it is time for us to bring them home swiftly. But we have a moral obligation and a constitutional obligation to bring them home safely. This is why I support the Reid resolution. This resolution states clearly that the Congress and the American people support our troops. Yet, at the same time, we are saying bring the troops home by March 31, 2008. Unlike the reckless incompetency that got us into the war, we are following the guidelines of the Iraq Study Group, wise heads who pondered some of the best ways to a new way forward.

The Reid resolution sets a framework and a time line for doing what needs to be done and assuring our troops that we honor their service, and we are