

leader after lunch what other amendments we would hope to have an opportunity to vote on. I share his view that we ought to wrap this bill up as soon as reasonably possible. We will be working toward that end throughout the day.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the first half of the time under the control of the minority and the second half of the time under the control of the majority. The Senator from Kansas.

IRAQ

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I thank the leaders for the time this morning.

I recently returned from a trip looking into what is taking place in the war on terrorism. I was in Afghanistan in Kabul and also went to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, had a brief meeting in Pakistan with our Ambassador and military leadership in Pakistan and also in Kuwait. I then went from there to Iraq. I was in Baghdad for a period of 24 hours plus. I went to Irbil in northern Iraq in the Kurdish region, met with Barzani, head of the Kurdish region, and traveled to Ethiopia to the current front, the expanded front in the war on terrorism, saw what the Ethiopians are doing in Somalia. I met with the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, about what he is doing in Somalia. I had a very good meeting with him and also with our military commanders in that region, with the recent strikes we have done against terrorism in southern Somalia and work we have done with the Ethiopians.

All of this was very informative. There is a mixture of news to report as to what is taking place in the war on terrorism. There are some very positive things happening, particularly the recent events in Somalia, what the Ethiopians are pushing for, and some very positive things happening in Afghanistan, some difficulties we are still having with Pakistani leadership going after some of the threats on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Northern Iraq is booming, the Kurdish area. Investment is flowing. There are cranes and people are building. Baghdad is in great difficulty.

I, also, wish to talk about my suggestions for the route forward. I think the President, in his address, was saying he is proposing a route forward, and if others might oppose or have a different view, all I ask is that you put forward a proposal yourself. That is fair. That is what we ought to do. We are all in this, and we need to see the route forward.

There is good news in Iraq, certainly. We have 140,000 of America's best and

brightest working hard every day. I flew on troop transport planes in and out of various places with the troops and met and visited with them along the way. They are impressive. Their dedication and courage and commitment is impressive to feel. It is inspiring. It is inspiring to see. I have a niece and nephew who have signed up to join the Marines. So they are going into this as well. I am proud of them, as is the whole family.

The irrepressible spirit of our soldiers—from new recruits to veterans of multiple—is inspiring. I even saw a father-son team from Kansas in Kuwait. They are enthusiastic, determined, and we depend on them for the success we will achieve in Iraq. I know firsthand it is not just a good sound bite to say we have the best Armed Forces in the world. There is simply no other place in the world that can boast of so many courageous, committed, and talented volunteers so willing to make sacrifices, whenever the country calls upon them. They continue to deserve our great respect and admiration for performing so ably under such difficult circumstances. And the circumstances are that.

Baghdad still feels similar to an occupation zone. I was physically present in Baghdad for about 24 hours. It is hard to say that I saw the city. I left with an enduring image of concrete barriers and convoys of SUVs. I last visited Baghdad in March 2005. The environment is no better than it was at that period of time. Three mortar rounds exploded in the green zone while I was there meeting with the Iraqi Vice President. No one was harmed. They were launched from somewhere way out, but still they hit. It shows how insecure the city remains.

We all wish the situation would get better, but I am particularly disappointed. I have had a long-term interest in Iraq. When I first came to the Senate in 1996, I served on the Foreign Relations Committee and chaired the Middle East Subcommittee that held some of the first hearings on what to do about Saddam Hussein's regime. I carried the Iraq Liberation Act on the floor of the Senate that was signed into law by President Bill Clinton. I helped get the initial \$100 million for the Iraqi National Congress. I, also, attended the first INC meeting with Senator Bob Kerrey of Nebraska. We both went to New York City to meet with the opposition about what to do about Saddam Hussein. I, also, attended the first Iraqi National Congress meeting in London. I have been committed to a free, safe, and secure Iraq from the very beginning.

During my meetings last week, I found less reason for optimism. Sunni leaders blame everything on the Shia, and the Shia leaders likewise blame everything on the Sunnis. The Kurdish leadership pointed out that the Sunnis and Shia only meet when the Kurds call the meeting. All of this suggests

that, at the present time, the United States seems to care more about a peaceful Iraq than the Iraqis do. If that is the case, it is difficult to understand why more U.S. troops would make a difference.

One other bright spot was my visit to the northern part of the country, the Kurdish region. The security situation is stable and business is booming, as some number of people moving out of Iraq are moving into northern Iraq into the Kurdish region. The Kurds are demonstrating what is possible for the rest of Iraq when violence recedes. The Kurds are pragmatic. They are worried about committing Kurdish forces to Baghdad. I asked Brazani, would he commit Kurdish forces for the peace in Baghdad? He declined to do so. They don't want to get caught in the middle of a sectarian fight. If Iraqi Kurds feel this way, why should we feel any differently? Simply put, the Iraqis have to resolve these sectarian differences. We cannot do it for them.

This does not mean we should pull out of Iraq and leave behind a security vacuum or safe haven for terrorists. I do not support that alternative. It does mean that there must be a bipartisan agreement on our military commitment to Iraq. We cannot fight a war with the support of only one political party, and it does mean that the parties in Iraq—Sunni, Shia, and Kurds—must get to a political equilibrium. I think most people agree that a cut-and-run strategy does not serve our interests, nor those of the world, nor those of the region, nor those of the Iraqi people.

So I invite my colleagues all around, particularly on the other side of the aisle, to indicate what level of commitment they can support. We need to come together in Congress, and as a nation, on a strategy that will make real progress in Iraq and gain as much support as possible from the American people. Only a broadly supported, bipartisan strategy will allow us to remain in Iraq for the length of time necessary to ensure regional stability and to defeat the terrorists. That is our objective. Make no mistake, we may need to be in Iraq for some period of time, as we are in Bosnia, as we were in Europe, as we still remain in Korea. Iraqis should patrol their own streets, but we must continue to hunt down the terrorists. We must balance the aggressive moves by Iran, operating inside of Iraq, which seeks to exploit Iraq for its own gain.

These missions will take time to achieve on our part. It is vital we get a bipartisan way forward on Iraq as soon as possible. I invite people on the other side of the aisle to put forward their proposals. As we refine our military posture, we should also enlist the support of Iraq's neighbors, through a diplomatic initiative similar to the recommendations of the Baker-Hamilton Commission. Although I don't support all of those initiatives, I thought they had some good ideas, particularly engaging Iraq's neighbors. Each of Iraq's

neighbors can benefit from a peaceful Iraq, and they can assist us in reaching a political equilibrium among Iraq's various groups. These include Iran and Syria, which are clearly meddling in Iraq but whose cooperation will be necessary for any political solution in Iraq to be relevant for the long term.

To be successful, such a diplomatic initiative will require a great amount of attention and hard work. Thus, I recommend Secretary Rice and Vice President CHENEY go to Iraq and practice shuttle diplomacy. They should lay the groundwork for a meeting of leaders from all three major Iraqi groups to take place outside of Iraq. This kind of a meeting could be similar to the Dayton Accords that helped resolve the conflict in Bosnia. It would allow for intense, sustained discussions aimed at a durable, long-term political settlement amongst the Iraqis. One potential political settlement could involve a three-State, one-country formula. Each of Iraq's major groups would have its own autonomous region with Baghdad as a federal city.

Each group can manage its own affairs while preserving Iraq's territorial integrity. This is something the Iraqi Constitution allows, that the Kurdish people are practicing, and that the Iraqi leaders, I believe, should pursue to get to a political equilibrium. We have made our share of mistakes in Iraq. Still, we have invested the lives of more than 3,000 of our best and brightest for our Nation's future.

The mission for which they died is not yet complete. We still need political equilibrium if we are to achieve a stable, united Iraq that can be an ally in the war on terrorism. We must win in Iraq, and we will. We must win for the future of the region and for the future of the world and for the future of Iraq. We must win for the future of America. That victory will require more than bullets; it will require political arrangements inside Iraq and around Iraq to end the sectarian violence and move toward a peaceful future for the Iraqi people and stability for the region. We are in a tough time, but I believe we have solutions that can work.

I yield the floor.

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

THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY'S PERSPECTIVE ON IRAQ

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Kansas, who made the point well that we cannot afford to lose in Iraq. I thought my colleagues, and maybe those who may be interested—if anybody is paying attention and watching the floor—may be interested to hear what the intelligence community said in public. It is rare we have public hearings in the Intelligence Committee, but once a year at least we have the worldwide threat hearing.

Last Thursday, we had that hearing and we spent about 5½ hours. It was

very informative and mostly dealt with Iraq. Present were the Director of National Intelligence, Ambassador Negroponte; Director Hayden of the CIA; Director of the DIA General Maples; Mr. Foote from the State Department INR; and FBI Director Robert Mueller. Much of the questioning was about what is going on in Iraq. I think the consensus of the intelligence community was that while things have not gone well, the new commitment by Prime Minister Maliki and the rest of his Government—not just the Shia Prime Minister but the Kurds and the Sunnis—was to take over and take ownership of ending the insurgency in Iraq. That gave us the best hope of achieving a peaceful solution that would leave Iraq a stable country—not perfect by any means, with no guarantee of success, but this was the opportunity to get the three major elements in Iraq—the Shia, Sunnis, and the Kurds—to come together on what we believe will be and should be a long-term solution.

Frankly, one of the real problems we have had has been the reluctance of the Iraqi Government to let us go in and eliminate Shia militia, such as the Moqtada al-Sadr Mahdi army. This has been a serious problem. The American forces have been held back. Now it is our understanding—and the intelligence community believes what they have told the policymakers in the executive branch—that this is now the best chance, because they realize time is running out, that while our commitment was strong to Iraq, it is not an unending one, infinite.

They are going to have to take control if they don't want to see their country descend into chaos. So there was a lot of talk about the pros and cons of the policy the President announced to turn over the responsibility to the Iraqi military, for ending the insurgency in Baghdad, and to send our troops into the Al Anbar province to deal with radical Islamists, such as al-Qaida, who continue to stir up problems and who we believe were responsible for the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samara, which escalated the insurgency.

So I asked another question and the answers, I thought, were very telling. They were not covered in the media. I asked what if we decided now or within 2 or 3 months to withdraw and turn it over to the Iraqi Government, and the consensus was uniform and frightening.

Admiral Negroponte said:

And I think the view pretty much across the community is that a precipitous withdrawal could lead to a collapse of the government of that country, and a collapse of their security forces, because we simply don't think that they are ready to take over, to assume full control of their security responsibilities.

We think that that is a goal that can be achieved on a gradual basis and on a well-planned basis. But to simply withdraw now, I think, could have catastrophic effects. And I think that's a quite widely held view inside of Iraq itself.

Later, I went back and asked what it would mean in terms of the worldwide terrorist threat of al-Qaida. Director Negroponte responded:

I think in terms of al-Qaida's own planning, if you look at the letter that Zawahiri wrote to Zarqawi last year about establishing in Iraq a sort of beachhead for the expansion of al-Qaida's ideology throughout the Islamic world, establishing the caliphate, it would be the very sanctuary for international terrorism that we are seeking to avoid.

In other words, the No. 2 man under Osama bin Laden, Zawahiri, wrote to the notorious, infamous butcher Zarqawi, who had beheaded Americans and others on television, to tell him to cool it; we are trying to establish a basis for al-Qaida to operate out of Iraq. This would be, in Zawahiri's and bin Laden's own words, establishing the range of the caliphate. What they mean by that is to establish a Taliban style of government, such as we saw in Afghanistan, on a regionwide and ultimately a global basis.

I asked General Maples about the impact of withdrawal, precipitous or immediate, or politically, a timetable withdrawal, determined by what we want in Washington, rather than what is available on the ground. He said:

... I believe that a failure in Iraq would empower the jihadist movement. It would give that base of operations from which the jihadist movement would expand. And it's consistent with the goals of al-Qaida in Iraq to establish that Islamic state, and then to expand it into the caliphate.

He went on to say there would be regional impacts and that there would be a tremendous economic impact. He cited hydrocarbons and, obviously, we know Iraq is very rich in oil reserves, and it would make oil reserves available to fund the activities of al-Qaida and the international radical Islamist terrorist movements. He also said it would have an impact on the world market on oil, driving up the power of oil. He concluded by saying it would give Iran the power to expand its evil empire, which President Ahmad-Nejad is urgently trying to expand not only in the Middle East but throughout Latin America.

I think probably the best summary of the intelligence community estimates of the impact of the choices—and we are talking about choices—is there is nothing good in terms of choices. One option has been put forward by President Bush. I happen to believe it is the best available option to support the Iraqis who have committed to end the insurgency, to bring the Sunnis into a government that would share in the oil revenues and take responsibility for ending the insurgency, while our troops go after the external forces, the terrorists coming in from other countries and joining the al-Qaida movement.

I asked General Hayden to give me a concise statement of his view and the view of the intelligence community on the second option, which would be to