

war, which is obviously already going on, to some degree, which will be expanded radically with many thousands of people, more thousands of people dying, there will undoubtedly occur within Iraq the creation of a client state for Iran, and Iran has made it very clear what their intentions are. Their intentions are to develop a nuclear weapon and produce hegemony throughout the Islamic world.

Secondly, it will become a safe haven for al-Qaida and give them a base of operation which will represent a clear and present threat to us as a nation.

So that type of course of action, although it obviously looks attractive because it gets our troops out of immediate harm's way, and everybody wants to do that to the fullest extent possible, will have the exact opposite effect on our national security. It will actually put us at greater risk.

There has to be an underscoring of the withdrawal, or the drawdown, which I think is the more appropriate term, because even the most strident people on the other side of the aisle who wish to withdraw recognize there is going to have to be some residual force left for the purpose of protecting American assets, such as our embassies, and training, hopefully, troops of the Iraqi Government. But any process for the drawdown really has to be done in the context of leaving behind a stable government as we can possibly create, or participate in helping to create. That is why I have become a sponsor of and participating in the effort to put in place the proposals of the Iraq Study Group, which essentially outlines a series of steps that can be taken which will, hopefully, lead us toward a drawdown of American troops which is tied to leaving behind a stable government.

The Reed-Levin amendment abandons all of that. It abandons the Iraq Study Group proposal. It abandons the effort to try to leave in place a stable government. It essentially says: Here is the date; we are going to leave by that date. And it is a date certain.

That has two effects. It means the Government of Iraq will inevitably be in desperate shape and potentially collapse, which will lead to chaos, and, more importantly, it means our troops who are on the ground will, during that period leading up to that date, be under significant stress because their morale will be at serious issue because they will know when they get to that date, they are leaving and they are leaving behind a mess and, more importantly, they will be pursuing a mission, which they will have been told by the other side of the aisle at least, has no viability. And how can you ask somebody to go out and walk the streets of Baghdad and participate in "the surge and the clear and hold and hopefully pass on stability" exercise that is going on there if you have the other side of the aisle saying: I am sorry, that mission is irrelevant. You are out there, we don't believe in what you are doing, we have no faith in that effort.

Yes, everyone has total commitment to our troops, but we also have to have a commitment that when we send the troops out on the street, and they put their lives at risk, they know there is a policy behind that effort which is supported. In this case, what is being said is that policy isn't being supported and their efforts on the streets in Baghdad and other places are not going to have support.

It is a very dangerous message to send, first, to our enemies who have a specific date and can ratchet up the violence radically to force that date on us; second, to our troops on the ground; and thirdly, to the long-term stability of a region which is critical to our national interests and which plays a major role in whether we are going to be successful in keeping our homeland, America, from being attacked.

A precipitous withdrawal without a game plan will lead to a dysfunctional and disorganized and possibly collapse of the Government of Iraq, and it will lead to chaos. Therefore, I think it is a very intemperate policy to pursue.

There is also a certain cynicism about it, when you get right down to it, and this bothers me. The people promoting this amendment have constituencies who are truly and sincerely, I am sure, committed to getting us out of Iraq as soon as possible, and they are trying to respond to those constituencies. We see those constituencies all the time, and their intensity is huge; especially in the Democratic Party they have great sway. But the amendment itself is almost a free pass in that everybody knows it cannot pass, and that is the irony. It is a free pass that cannot pass. It cannot pass the Senate because it cannot get 60 votes. If it did pass the Senate, and it did pass the House, it would be vetoed by the President and, clearly, would not go into effect.

So, essentially, what is happening is a policy is being put forward which has serious political implications on the ground and substantive implications on the ground in Iraq but has maybe a political upside in the United States for people who are speaking to that constituency which wants to immediately get us out of Iraq but has no viability behind it, has no expectation of success behind it, and therefore is, to a certain degree—a considerable degree—a rather cynical strategy.

The losers in this effort, quite honestly, are our troops on the ground because they are seeing this debate going forward, and they are scratching their heads saying: Why am I being asked to go out on the streets? Why am I being asked to do this mission when they trying to pass legislation in the Senate which says they don't support the mission, and they know for sure that is not going to become law?

It is not good to pursue this type of an approach on an issue of such importance, of such significance to our Nation, and especially to the men and women who defend us.

I have serious reservations about not only the substance of the proposal but about the politics behind the proposal, knowing that the proposal has no capacity to become law, that it would be put forward in such a way that basically creates false claims, in my opinion, or false opportunities, or alleged opportunities.

This is an immensely serious issue, we all know that. What we need, quite honestly, is some sort of approach that has a little bit of bipartisanship to it, where both sides say: OK, we know we have a difficult situation, an extremely frustrating situation in Iraq. Let's come up with something that is a united policy, a bipartisan policy. That is why the suggestion which is being put forward—to put in place the Iraq Study Group as the blueprint for how we proceed there—is one which I think has some vitality to it.

Is it the perfect answer? Obviously not. There is no perfect answer. In fact, I was interested in hearing Lee Hamilton say there are no good solutions to this situation. It was a very forthright statement that I think resonates strongly.

The fact is, this little gambit—not a little gambit—this significant gambit of putting forward a proposal that speaks to a constituency, but everyone knows is not going to become law, is not constructive for the process.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, what is the pending business before the Senate?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate is in a period of morning business. Three minutes remains on the majority side, and three minutes remains on the minority side.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask that I may speak in morning business on the Democratic side.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized.

WEBB AMENDMENT 2012

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the Webb amendment. I know there will be many speakers. Like everything I do, I want to seize the day and talk about what I think about the Webb amendment.

It is almost 10:30 in the morning in Washington. It is 6:30 in the evening in Baghdad. Yesterday, in Washington it was 98 degrees, and everybody was complaining about the heat wave. They couldn't wait until they got into air-conditioning. Well, it was 115 degrees in Baghdad and, boy, would I like to get our troops in air-conditioning—in air-conditioning back home.

I check the temperature every single day in Baghdad because I want to think about our troops. I want to try to envision what they are going through. I think about those men and women out there carrying over 100

pounds of body armor in brutal heat, being shot at, being attacked by brutal IEDs. Yes, it is hot in Baghdad, and it is hot in more ways than one.

We need to care about our troops, and we need to care for our troops. We all say we support our troops. Well, let's support them, all 100 of us, all 100 Senators. Regardless of party and how we voted on the war, let's say we support our troops. Then if we really do support them, let's support the Webb amendment.

The Webb amendment does support our troops and our families and also the employers of those in the Guard and Reserve. But it supports our troops. The Webb amendment gives our troops a breather, and if the Pentagon will not do it, Congress needs to do it. That is why I support the Webb amendment.

I salute the Senator from Virginia. Senator WEBB is a freshman Senator, but he is no stranger to war. He is a warrior's warrior, a combat veteran. He also was the Secretary of the Navy. He knows full well the stresses the men and women in our military are facing and their families are facing.

The Webb amendment is simple and straightforward. It supports our troops by giving them more time at home between deployments. It deals with troop fatigue. It deals with troop exhaustion. For our men and women in the military, if you are in the full-time military, the all-volunteer military, your time at home would be at least as long as the length of your last deployment. For the Guard and the Reserve, no one would be redeployed within three times of their previous deployment.

Why is this important? Our military is overstretched, and our troops are exhausted. Their families are also living with tremendous stress. Every time they hear a news report about another attack, they wonder how their loved one is and if they are surviving. They have an unending, agonizing fear of a strange car pulling up to their home with unbearable news. Whether you are a spouse, a mom, or a dad, or children, you are bearing the stress of this war. The Webb amendment gives our troops a breather and some relief to our families.

This current President says the struggle in Iraq will be long and will require continued sacrifice. Sacrifice from whom? There is no shared sacrifice. The sacrifice is falling on our troops now serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. The sacrifice has been made by those who died in Iraq, by the 85 Marylanders who died in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. President, you are from Maryland. You know that some of the men and women who died came from our service academies—West Point, the Naval Academy. Some came from renowned schools and universities. Some of our kids came from the school of hard knocks. One, named Kendall Frederick, only had a green card. He died when a bomb hit his convoy when he

was driving to get his fingerprints taken so that he could become an American citizen. Thousands of others are wounded.

Some say we are micromanaging the war. You know what. I am for micromanaging the war. Maybe if we micro-managed the war, it would not be costing us \$12 billion a month, and maybe we wouldn't be going it alone. So no matter how one feels about deadlines or benchmarks, we must support our troops. And I believe this is the way to do it.

I conclude by saying this: While our troops are out there every day in 115-degree heat, let's see what the Iraq Parliament is doing. Our guys are fighting for a military solution. Let's see what they are doing for a political solution.

The Iraqi Parliament cannot even reach a quorum. Mr. President, 12 members of the Iraqi 38-Member Parliament no longer attend Cabinet meetings. So one-third of the Cabinet doesn't show up for meetings. Seventy-five Members of the Iraqi Parliament are boycotting, refusing to do any work at all so that the very Parliament cannot get a quorum. While the Iraqi Parliament doesn't show up and stays home in its air-conditioning, our guys and gals are out there patrolling Baghdad in 115-degree heat with 100 pounds of equipment and body armor. Listen, if you support the troops, support Webb.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1558, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1585) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Nelson of Nebraska (for Levin) amendment No. 2011, in the nature of a substitute.

Webb amendment No. 2012 (to amendment No. 2011), to specify minimum periods between deployment of units and members of the Armed Forces for Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Nelson of Florida amendment No. 2013 (to amendment No. 2012), to change the enactment date.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 11:30 a.m. will be for debate only, with the time equally divided and controlled between the chair and ranking member of the Armed Services

Committee or their designees, with the 20 minutes immediately prior to 11:30 a.m. divided equally between the two leaders, with the majority leader controlling the final 10 minutes.

Who yields time?

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I would ask the sponsor of the amendment if he would like to begin or does he choose to have me discuss this amendment? I am amenable to either course.

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, I am comfortable with the Senator from Arizona beginning the discussion. We are waiting for the chairman to arrive.

Mr. MCCAIN. Well then, Mr. President, I will go ahead.

I understand there is 20 minutes equally divided; is that correct, Mr. President?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona controls 20 minutes.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I will yield myself just 4 minutes and then save some of the remaining time.

Mr. President, this amendment calls for a congressionally mandated fence that would surround every soldier, sailor, airman, and marine and every military unit in the Armed Forces. If their days at home don't equal the days deployed, these soldiers, by law, could not be deployed in support of operations in Iraq or Afghanistan. It is quite a restriction.

I have done some research recently, since I heard about this amendment, and it is certainly without precedent in wartime, and we are in wars, both in Iraq and Afghanistan. Rather than get into the debate about the length of the war in Iraq again, I think most people appreciate the fact that the war or the conflict in Afghanistan will be with us for a long time. I mention that because I have yet to see a congressional proposal to end our engagement in Afghanistan where we were successful in ousting the Taliban, but, obviously, there are more challenges we have to meet in the future.

In the Defense authorization bill, we have provisions to increase the size of the Marine Corps and the Army, which I hope will alleviate some of the enormous strain that has been placed on our Guard, Reserve, and Active-Duty Forces. I understand the deep concern of the Senator from Virginia about this issue. Our Guard and Reserve are being stressed in a way that is unprecedented, probably since World War II, when everybody was called to serve, just about, and I certainly understand the concerns raised here. I share them with Guard members and members of the Reserve all the time.

We have called people back to active duty in an almost unprecedented fashion, so I understand the intent of this amendment. But if we put such a requirement into law in wartime, I think it would be bad congressional micromanagement. It would be a precedent that no President could live with and an expression of distrust in military leaders, particularly of the Secretary