

fight terrorism first, and that is not what we are now doing. Let us decide to fight terrorism first. That ought to be the goal. If the terrorist camps are reconstituted, if the threat to our country from al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden, and al-Zawahiri represents a greater threat now, then we must, it seems to me, change course to address that threat, and that threat requires us to fight terrorism first.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

PETE GEREN

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I hoped to speak earlier this week when we were engaged in debate on the Defense authorization bill. That was a night, I am sure our Acting President pro tempore recalls, when folks didn't get much sleep around here. A lot of my colleagues decided as they spoke they wanted to speak for a long time. As a result, I suspect fewer than half of us got to speak, and I had just a few thoughts I wanted to share with respect to not just the Defense authorization bill but the war in which we find ourselves in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Before I do that, I wish to mention that I think it was last Friday at the end of the regular business session—maybe it was Thursday—we went through the Executive Calendar. As the Senator from Ohio knows, on the Executive Calendar we actually take up nominations submitted by the committee that need confirmation by the Senate and we deal with those. Oftentimes, if they are not controversial, we deal with them by unanimous consent.

One of the nominations that came before us last week, under unanimous consent, was that of Pete Geren, who had been nominated to be Secretary of the Army. Our Acting President pro tempore spent a number of years in the House of Representatives. I was there 10 years. I think he was there for about as long, maybe even longer.

One of the finest people I ever served with in the House of Representatives was a Democratic Congressman from Texas who actually succeeded Jim Wright. Jim Wright stepped down as our Speaker, resigned from the Congress, there was a special election, and who ended up getting elected but Pete Geren. He became a Congressman for four terms and was admired by Democrats and Republicans alike. Before that, he had served as an aid to a legendary Senator from Texas, a fellow named Lloyd Bentsen, who was also our party's nominee for Vice President.

Pete went to Georgia Tech and the University of Texas. He got a law de-

gree from the University of Texas, married well, had three kids, and ended up here in the Congress with all of us. He resigned after his fourth term and went back to Texas to become a businessperson and to practice law. He did that for I think about 5 years, and lo and behold, he got a call from a Republican administration to ask him to serve in the Department of Defense, where he was a senior aid in the Secretary's office, a role he played for I think about 3 or 4 years.

Subsequent to that, Pete Geren was asked to serve in a variety of roles. He has been our Acting Secretary of the Air Force, he has been the Under Secretary of the Army, the Interim Secretary of the Army, and for the last week or so now, he has been the Secretary of the Army.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD his statement before the Armed Services Committee, his confirmation hearing statement.

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

[Congressional Hearings, June 19, 2007]

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON THE NOMINATION OF PRESTON GEREN TO BE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

GEREN: Mr. Chairman and Senator Warner and members of the committee, it truly is an honor to be before you today as the president's nominee.

I want to thank the president for his confidence in me and Dr. Gates for his confidence, as well. It's truly a privilege to have this opportunity.

Let me thank Senator Hutchison and Senator Cornyn for their very kind remarks, two great leaders for our state and two great leaders in this Senate, and I deeply appreciate, and I know my family did, as well, their kind and generous remarks.

Mr. Chairman, I'd also like to note Senator Hutchison's predecessor, who was the person who brought me into public life, Senator Lloyd Bentsen, and had it not been for the opportunity to work for Senator Bentsen, I'm confident I would not have the opportunities to serve in our government today.

Senator Bentsen passed away over the past year, a great American, a great Senator, and I want to acknowledge my debt to him.

Senator, I had introduced my family earlier. I've got, as you do, three wonderful girls, three great kids, and, again, I want to thank them for standing with me and standing with Beckie and me in our time here in Washington and all the time.

My family and I came to Washington planning a three-year hitch and six years later, we're still here.

I joined the Department of Defense in August 2001, expecting a peacetime assignment in business transformation of the Department of Defense. Then came September 11 and the war.

There's a sense of mission working among our military during time of war that's hard to walk away from. For the past six years, I've watched soldiers, sailors and airmen go off to war and I've watched their families stand steadfast and unwavering in their support of their departed loved ones and live with the uncertainty of whether he or she would return home.

And they live with a certainty that there would be birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, graduations and the ups and downs of everyday life that their loved one would miss for

12 months, originally, and now 15 months and too often watch those families live with a loss when their loved one did not return.

I've been inspired by the selfless service of our soldiers and humbled by the sacrifice of their families. I've held staff and leadership jobs in the Pentagon over these past six years and consider it the privilege of a lifetime to have the opportunity to work on behalf of our men and women in our nation's military and their families during the time of war.

Our grateful nation cannot do enough and I'm honored to play a part, a supporting role in their service to our nation on the front lines.

When I came before you seeking confirmation as under secretary of the Army, I told you my top priority would be taking care of soldiers and their families. I reaffirm that commitment today with a greater understanding of that responsibility.

My year as under secretary of the Army taught me much. My four months as acting secretary of the Army has taught me much more.

We have over 140,000 soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. We can never take our eye off of that ball. They're counting on their Army, big Army, to continue to provide them the training, equipment and leadership to take the fight to the enemy and defend themselves.

They count on their Army leadership back home to move the bureaucracy on the home front. They count on their secretary and their chief to stand up for them, get them what they need when they need it.

We must act with urgency every day, every day, to meet their needs. Today, the issue is MRAP. Tomorrow, it will be different. The enemy is forever changing and forever adapting.

Mr. Chairman, further, as an Army, we pledge never to leave a fallen comrade. That is not an abstract notion. That means on the battlefield, in the hospital, or in an outpatient clinic or over a life of dependency, if that is what's required to fulfill this pledge.

I've witnessed the cost in human terms and to the institution of the Army when we break faith with that pledge, as a handful did at Walter Reed. A few let down the many and broke that bond of trust.

But I have seen soldiers, enlisted, NCOs and officers respond when they learned that someone has let down a soldier. They step up and they make it right. They make it better and they do not rest until the job is done and they expect and demand accountability.

And I've seen the strain of multiple deployments on soldiers' families. A wife and mother said recently, "I can hold the family together for one deployment. Two is harder and three is harder still." Over half of our soldiers today are married with families. Over 700,000 children are in the families of our soldiers.

The health of the all volunteer force depends on the health of those families. We must expect that our future offers an era of persistent conflict. We will continue to ask much of the Army family. We must meet the needs of our families, provide them with a quality of life comparable to the quality of their service and sacrifice.

It's the right thing to do and the future of our all volunteer force depends on it.

And as President Lincoln pledged to us as a nation, our duty does not stop when our soldier or our nation leaves the field of battle. We must care for those who have borne the battle, his widow and his orphan.

That commitment extends over the horizon and we have learned we have much to do to fulfill that commitment. Lately, we have come face to face with some of our shortcomings, a complex disability system that

can frustrate and fail to meet the needs of soldiers, a system that often fails to acknowledge, understand and treat some of the most debilitating, yet invisible wounds of war, leaving soldiers to return from war only to battle bureaucracy at home and leaving families at a loss on how to cope.

The Department of Defense, working with the Veterans Affairs Department and this committee and this Congress have a opportunity that does not come along often to move our nation a quantum leap forward in fulfillment of that commitment. We cannot squander this opportunity.

And, Mr. Chairman and Senator Warner, I commend this committee for the step forward you all took last week in your bill to start the process of meeting the needs of those wounded warriors and we look forward to working with you, again, to push that initiative.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for all you do for our soldiers and their families. The Army has no greater friend than this committee.

Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution makes the Army and the Congress full partners in the defense of our nation and in the service of our soldiers and their families.

If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to work with you in discharging our duty to those soldiers.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

LEVIN: Secretary Geren, thank you for a heartfelt and a powerful statement. I can't remember that I've ever heard a better one, frankly, coming from a nominee. It was very personal and I think it had power.

I wish every American, every soldier and everyone of their families could have heard your opening statement.

Mr. CARPER. Subsequent to his giving his statement, the chairman of the committee, CARL LEVIN, and later on Senator JOE LIEBERMAN—both praised the statement, Senator LEVIN saying, "I can't remember that I've ever heard a better one, frankly, coming from a nominee. . . ." He said it was "a heartfelt and a powerful statement."

One of my favorite sayings is: In politics, friends come and go, but our enemies accumulate. For a lot of us in this business, that is the truth. Pete Geren is the exception to that rule. He is admired and liked by people with whom he served in the House and Senate, Democrat and Republican. For a Democrat in Congress ending up to be asked to serve as Acting Secretary and Secretary of the Army is a compliment and really reflective of the kind of person he is. He is a person who tries to figure out what is the right thing to do and to do it. He routinely, consistently treats other people the way he would want to be treated. He has great values, great work ethic, and is just a terrific public servant to the people of this country.

I am delighted he has now been asked to serve and was confirmed by all of us unanimously to serve as our Secretary of the Army. It is a big job, a tough job at a tough time to serve in that capacity, but I know he will have our full support. He certainly has my support and my long-time admiration.

IRAQ

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I would like to step back for a few minutes and

reflect on the debate that occurred here a few nights ago with respect to the war in Iraq. One of the things I like to do is to try to see if we can't find consensus—rather than just disagreeing on issues, to try to find ways to bring us together. I have been reflecting a good deal on that debate.

I had an opportunity, along with two of our colleagues, Senator BEN NELSON and Senator MARK PRYOR, to have a breakfast meeting with Secretary Gates at the Pentagon earlier this week. That was the first time I had ever had a chance to spend any personal time with Secretary Gates, who came to us as one of the people who served on the Iraq Study Group. You may recall that, Mr. President, he served there for most of its time and has been president of Texas A&M. He served in a number of leadership posts here in earlier administrations and was a senior official in intelligence. He is a very bright, able guy and also of very good heart, someone who, over breakfast with us, was remarkably candid in his observations, not someone who tried to sugar-coat what is going on in Iraq but who just was as honest and forthright with us. That was enormously refreshing.

He is a person of strong intellect, obviously, and a person who dealt with a faculty senate at Texas A&M and I think is not uncomfortable dealing with the U.S. Senate. I have been told by any number of people who have been presidents of universities that the transition to working here in this body is not all that hard. If you can work with a faculty senate, you can work with the U.S. Senate. We have a couple of people here, ironically, who have been university presidents and now serve here, among them LAMAR ALEXANDER from the University of Tennessee.

I left the breakfast meeting actually feeling encouraged about maybe the prospects, somewhere down the line, of finding consensus.

Here in the United States, our patience grows thin with respect to our involvement there. We have been involved for over 4 years. We have lost thousands of lives, we spent hundreds of billions of dollars—money we have largely borrowed from folks such as the Chinese, South Koreans, and Japanese because these are moneys we don't have, so we simply increase our Nation's indebtedness to pay for this war. Meanwhile, those in this country who pay the taxes, whose sons and daughters, husbands and wives have gone over and been shot at, in some cases been shot, hurt, wounded, in some cases killed—they paid the price and have borne the burden. In many cases, they are tired of it, as I think most of us are. We would like to see the beginning of the end and, frankly, a new beginning at the same time for the people of Iraq.

I think for the most part most of us realize we are going to have a military involvement there, we are going to

have a presence in Iraq, maybe for several years. If you look at Kosovo, we have been out of Kosovo for 10 years, but we are still there militarily. The war ended in Korea over 50 years ago; we still have a significant military presence there. I think it is likely we are going to have a military presence in Iraq for some time. The question is, What should they be doing? What should our troops be doing?

Today, as you know, we are policing a civil war, trying to keep Sunnis and Shiites from killing each other while at the same time going after insurgents and training Iraqi troops and trying to help secure the borders of Iraq. My hope is a year from now—and I suggest a year from now—we will still have troops in Iraq, probably tens of thousands, hopefully not 140,000 or 150,000 troops. What will they be doing? My hope is they will not be policing a civil war. My hope is they will not have to be involved in trying to keep Sunnis from killing Shiites and vice versa. My expectation is there is going to continue to be a need to train and equip and supply Iraqi armed forces and police. There will be a need for our troops to protect U.S. assets, the embassy, and other physical infrastructure we have, that we own or occupy. There will be a need in some cases to join the Iraqis in counterinsurgency operations against the really bad guys. There may be an opportunity and need for us to help police the borders of Iraq with Syria and Iran, borders which leak like sieves today.

Those are the kinds of responsibilities I suspect our troops will be called upon to perform. But my hope is we will not need as many of them, not nearly as many of them, that they will not be as numerous nor as visible and hopefully not as much in danger as they have been the last 4 years.

On the Iraqi side, what I heard 4½ weeks ago, about a month ago when I was last there, is a lot of the Iraqis don't want us to be there in such great numbers. They don't want us to be as visible. They don't want us to be as numerous. Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki suggested about a week ago that whenever we are ready to step out they are ready to step up. I wish that were true. He later sort of spoke again or someone stepped in, one of his spokespeople stepped in and said that is not exactly what he said or what he meant.

I believe the Iraqis are not of one mind with regard to our presence. Some would like it if we would leave tomorrow, but a number realize we have sacrificed and given our life's blood, a lot of money, a lot of patience with them, and I think for a lot of the folks there they realize that and they appreciate that. But they don't want us to be as numerous or visible, and eventually they want to have their country back with us not as an occupying force, although some may see us as that, but have us playing a diminishing role.

What I think we have here is a growing consensus in this country to begin