

days this time and the chairman close to waive his own rule and hold a hearing without an evaluation from the American Bar Association, something we still do not have today for Judge White.

That is a party that insisted we always have the ABA evaluation in—for Republican nominees.

So written questions following the hearing were entirely in order. The number of questions asked of Judge White pales in comparison to the number of questions my friends on the other side have asked of President Bush's judicial nominees who had been pending far longer and for whom we had received an ABA—American Bar Association—evaluation.

We had 112 days before Fifth Circuit nominee Jennifer Elrod's hearing, for example, more than five times longer than we had with Judge White. Yet my Democratic friends gave Judge Elrod 108 questions, far more than Judge White has received. After all that, the Senate confirmed Judge Elrod by voice vote.

I might add, to mention a nonjudicial nominee, Grace Becker, who was nominated 189 days ago to head the Civil Rights Division. She has received 250 questions from my Democratic friends. I hear they are not done yet. It is as though no Republican should have the job of heading the Civil Rights Division. Grace is a former counsel on the Judiciary Committee and is well known to all of us as a woman of intellect, character, and compassion. She is a Eurasian woman with whom I think nobody can find one iota of fault.

A few days ago, the current Judiciary Committee chairman said the judicial confirmation process reminded him of the fairytale, "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." Sometimes it reminds me, instead, of the episode of the sitcom "Seinfeld" about "Bizarro World." That is the world where everything up is down, left is right, and everything is not as it seems. In the "Bizarro World" of today's judicial confirmation process, a plan almost certain to fail is called a commitment; 84 is called 75; a senatorial courtesy see is called a pocket filibuster; being more productive is being called being less productive; and due diligence is being called obstruction. I believe the facts and the truth matter, even in the judicial confirmation process, in spite of some of this rhetoric.

WARTIME SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, In February I addressed the Senate about our progress in Iraq. I categorized the results of General Petraeus' comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy as being remarkable.

When General Petraeus first began to implement his strategy 16 months ago, I was optimistic. However, I must admit that I did not expect to see the level of success that has been accomplished in such a short period of time.

What are those accomplishments?

Al-Qaida has largely been removed from its sanctuaries in Ramadi, Fallujah, Baghdad and much of the Diyala province. I went there when all those were seemingly under Al-Qaida control. I also went back and walked the streets of Ramadi after the surge. That was the second trip.

Make no mistake, these are major victories.

However, what has largely gone unnoticed by the media, is that even in the less than 2 months since General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker came before Congress, these successes have continued and expanded.

Which leads me to ask the obvious question? Why, with all of these accomplishments that were attained through the blood, sweat and tears of our service members and their families, do the members on the other side of the aisle insist upon throwing it all away by setting arbitrary deadlines for the removal of the bulk of our forces from Iraq?

The only logical answer is that instead of attempting to devise a cohesive strategy that achieves victory, the Democrats are more interested in pandering to the appeasement wing of their party in a misguided attempt to curry political favor.

This is a strategy for defeat and national shame.

I repudiate such an approach. My colleague, Senator McCain repudiates such an approach. And I believe the American people will repudiate this approach once they have all of the facts that somehow continue to escape widespread coverage by our media. Why don't they tell the truth? Why don't they tell about the successes?

But before I discuss the most recent accomplishments of U.S. and Iraqi forces, I believe it is important for the American people to understand one of the elements behind our recent success.

General Petraeus' strategy is based upon the classic counterinsurgency tactic of providing security to the local population, thereby enabling the government to restore services to its people. This, in turn, creates in the population a vested interest in the success of government institutions.

One of the ways this is accomplished is through the use of Joint Security Stations. Under this tactic, a portion of a city, such as a neighborhood, is cordoned off then searched for insurgents. Previously, once this was accomplished, our forces would return to large forward-operating bases, usually on the periphery of that city. The result was easy to predict, the insurgents would return once the sweep had concluded.

Under General Petraeus' strategy, our forces remain in the neighborhood and build Joint Security Stations, which then become home to a company-sized unit of American service members, as well as Iraqi army and police units. They live together. These facilities not only help secure the sur-

rounding area, but simultaneously enable our forces to train and evaluate Iraqi forces. Much like the police officer walking a beat in a major city, our forces use the Joint Security Station to learn about the locale where they are assigned and can quickly adapt to meet the unique security needs of the individual community. This, in turn, permits the creation of vital infrastructure projects that provide power, clean water and schools to these newly secured areas. This instills within the people in the area a desire for the security and civil services to continue; which, in turn, strengthens the population's support for an effective government to maintain these improvements. The success of these Joint Security Stations can be seen in their creation throughout Iraq, with more than 50 of them in Baghdad alone.

But, as I previously stated, since General Petraeus' testimony in February, the Coalition has only added to the accomplishments of al Anbar, Baghdad, and Diyala.

At the time of General Petraeus' testimony, many lauded these successes. But many also pointed to three major challenges that continued to face the Coalition.

The first major challenge was in this northern city of Mosul. Despite the fact that al-Qaida has largely been thrown out of its former sanctuaries in central Iraq, the terrorists have retreated to and are regrouping their forces in this northern city. It should also be noted that al-Qaida has used Mosul as a key logistics, transportation and financial center. In fact, Reuters has quoted U.S. military officials as saying that Mosul is al-Qaida's last major urban stronghold in Iraq.

Second, the Iraqi government did not have control of the vital southern city of Basra, which was dominated by a number of Shiite factions. As my colleagues well know, Basra is home to Iraq's only seaport and the area surrounding the city is the location of much of the nation's oil wealth.

Third, the Iraqi Government did not have control of a neighborhood in eastern Baghdad known as Sadr City, a predominately Shiite district that is a center of support for Moktada al-Sadr.

However, since General Petraeus' testimony there have been remarkable changes in Mosul, Basra, and Sadr City.

First, I must say that I am increasingly confident about the Coalition's chances for making positive advances in Mosul.

Remember, shortly after the fall of Saddam Hussein's government, General Petraeus, then a major general in command of the 101st Airborne Division, was responsible for restoring order in Mosul. It was here that General Petraeus was first able to implement and refine his theories on counterinsurgency warfare and was largely successful in securing the city.

Unfortunately, with the 101st's departure and the sharp reduction in the number of Coalition forces in Mosul—to as few as one American battalion—the city and surrounding area became a haven for al-Qaida.

However, in mid-2007 the Coalition forces began to achieve some success. This occurred in no small part because of the increased effectiveness of the 2nd and 3rd Iraqi divisions that were assigned to the city and surrounding areas. According to the Institute for the Study of War, in May and June positive results quickly became apparent with the capture or killing of 13 al-Qaida leaders, including 6 emirs and 4 terrorist cell leaders. Yet, as al-Qaida members were being pushed out of Baghdad and al Anbar Province, the number of terrorists in Mosul was increasing.

However, our forces, led by the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, which replaced the 4th Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division in December, and the Iraqi security forces have kept the pressure on. In mid-December, al-Qaida's security emir for northern Iraq was captured along with al-Qaida's security emir for Mosul. This was followed by the capture of al-Qaida's deputy emir for all of Mosul.

Our successes also have been strengthened with the reinforcement of our forces by additional U.S. and Iraqi forces. This has enabled Coalition and Iraqi forces to implement the counterinsurgency strategy of utilizing Joint Security Stations in the eastern and western portions of Mosul, much like those that were so successful in Baghdad.

The Iraqi Army units in Ninawa Province, of which Mosul is a major city, also have a new commander, LTG Riyadh Jalal Tawfiq. This is an important development since Lieutenant General Tawfiq played a vital role in securing Baghdad.

Despite these promising developments, much remains to be accomplished. On May 10, the Coalition launched Operation Mother of Two Springs. Though it is too early to tell if this operation will have the same successes that our forces are experiencing in Baghdad, MG Mark Hertling, the commander of Multi-National Forces—North stated yesterday that daily attacks are down 85 percent since the operation began. The General also noted that the Coalition has detained more than 1,200 individuals many of whom are self-proclaimed al-Qaida members who describe themselves as "battalion commanders . . . suicide bomb makers, foreign fighter facilitators, financiers and emirs." Moreover, a number of arms caches have been discovered. However, the desperation of al-Qaida appears to have increased due to Saturday's attack by two female suicide bombers.

Mr. President, the battle for Mosul is being fought right now. The final outcome has yet to be decided. However, initial indications point to a successful

conclusion because of the implementation of a proven counterinsurgency strategy, improvements in the Iraqi security forces and the bravery and dedication of our fighting men and women.

The second major area of consternation was Basra. Until recently, Shiite groups such as the Mahdi militia—which is associated with Moktada al-Sadr—ruled the streets.

In order to counter this lawlessness, Prime Minister al-Maliki launched Operation Charge of the Knights. This was a bold initiative. First, Prime Minister al-Maliki showed that he is a leader who is willing to make difficult political decisions to secure a better future for his people by traveling to Basra and taking personal charge of this operation. Second, this was a large-scale operation led and planned by Iraqi security forces to restore central government control in Basra.

At first, poor planning seemed to have doomed this operation. Even General Petraeus initially stated, "The fact is that the Iraqi operations in Basra were not properly planned . . . in the wake of recent operations, there were units and leaders found wanting in some cases . . ."

However, it appears that we all judged this operation too quickly. According to a recent article in the New York Times, "the oil-saturated city of Basra has been transformed by its own [Iraqi security forces] surge." Iraqi forces "have largely quieted the city, to the initial surprise and growing delight of many inhabitants who only a month ago shuddered under deadly clashes between Iraqi troops and Shiite militias . . . government forces have taken over Islamic militant's headquarters and halted the death squads and vice enforcers."

It should also be noted that according to the highly respected Jane's Defence Weekly "in areas occupied by Iraqi army forces, the government has begun a wide ranging set of operations to solidify its long-term presence."

In fact, due in large part to the success of Operation Charge of the Knights, Jane's Defence Weekly made the following observation: "Operation Charge of the Knights provides further evidence that the Iraqi army can fight effectively and lead operations when supported by coalition enablers such as air support, logistics, and intelligence. The Basra security operation follows other successful Iraqi army performances in the south, notably the January 2007 defeat of the Jund al-Samaa sect in pitched battles outside Karbala and the January 2008 simultaneous takedown of a dozen cultist cells from the same organization spread across Basra and Nasiriyah."

Finally, examples of the major strides the Iraqi forces are making can be seen in the operations that were launched this week in Sadr City. Yesterday, the New York Times reported that six battalions of, "Iraqi troops pushed deep into Sadr City. . . as the Iraqi government sought to establish

control over the densely populated Shiite enclave in the Iraqi capital. The long awaited military operation, which took place without the involvement of American ground forces, was the first determined effort by the government of Prime Minister al-Maliki to assert control over the sprawling Baghdad neighborhood, which has been a bastion of support for Moktada al-Sadr. The operation comes in the wake of the government's offensive in Basra, which for the time being seems to have pacified the southern Iraqi city and restored government control."

The New York Times goes on to report about the Sadr City operation, "the Iraqi forces quickly assumed positions at a main thoroughfare and near major hospitals and police stations. Two companies ventured even further north to secure the Iman Ali Hospital. . . No American ground forces accompanied the Iraqi troops, not even military advisers. But the Americans shared intelligence, coached the Iraqis during the planning and provided overhead reconnaissance throughout the operation. Still, the operation was very much an Iraqi plan."

Madam President, I believe that Ambassador Crocker summed up the situation best when he stated in his testimony: "Al-Qaida is in retreat in Iraq, but it is not yet defeated. Al-Qaida's leaders are looking for every opportunity they can to hang on. Osama bin Laden has called Iraq 'the perfect base,' and it reminds us that a fundamental aim of al-Qaida is to establish itself in the Arab world. It almost succeeded in Iraq; we cannot allow it a second chance. . ."

The choice is clear. The men and women of our armed forces have made real and sustained progress over the past 16 months. The list of their accomplishments and the accomplishments of the Iraqi security forces grows longer every day.

The balance is changing. Now, more than ever, is the time to stand behind our forces to ensure they achieve the victory of which they so deserve.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Florida). Without objection, it is so ordered.

JUDICIAL CONFIRMATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, in the final year of President Clinton's final Congress, two of his circuit court nominees, Richard Paez and Marsha Berzon, were pending in the Judiciary Committee. Frankly, they were quite controversial. For example, Judge Paez had openly defended judicial activism. He said if the Democratic branch has