

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 20 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I thank the Chair. (The remarks of Mr. ALEXANDER pertaining to the introduction of S. 1815 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. ALEXANDER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SUNUNU). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, under the previous order, morning business is closed.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2863, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2863) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BAYH. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I come to the Chamber today to discuss amendments to promote our success in Iraq as quickly as possible, consistent with accomplishing our mission there, to hold those in charge for implementing our strategy in Iraq accountable for its success, and to do right by those bearing the burden of that conflict on our behalf, our brave military personnel and their loving families.

These amendments are designed to increase the number of armored vehicles for our troops in the field and to promote and to protect their families financially at home but, even more important, to provide a clear picture of what we are doing in Iraq and a way to measure our progress there so that we can bring our troops home with their mission accomplished.

Last week, Generals Casey and Abizaid came to Congress to inform us that the administration had finally heeded bipartisan calls from this body to develop a plan for success, a plan that goes way beyond merely asking the American people to stay the course.

During their testimony before the Armed Services Committee and in private briefings for Senators, the generals talked about the plan and how it was developed jointly with Iraqi leadership. Essentially, if the plan is to be successful, it will lead to a reduction of American forces starting next year.

In a discussion with Senator McCAIN, General Casey had the following to say:

Senator McCain: Are you planning on troop withdrawals for next year?

General Casey: I just said that, Senator. Yes. This is a bipartisan goal that we all support. Creating a stable Iraq and bringing American men and women home safely as soon as possible consistent with success is something that we all embrace.

The generals also said that they had developed specific guidelines to allow them to measure the success of this plan. I am pleased that a plan has been developed and measurements created to gauge its success, although belatedly so. But I also know that having a plan is not nearly enough. It is the effective implementation of a strategy that will determine our ultimate success and establishing benchmarks that allow us to determine the progress that is being made. Regrettably, we have had far more of the development of a strategy and far less of the accountability for implementing the strategy so far in the Iraqi conflict. The time for changing that has come.

Successful execution of any plan includes two things that have been lacking so far—accountability and candor. My amendment brings both of these elements into the administration's war effort.

The amendment requires the Pentagon and the CIA to report to Congress and to the American people once a month on the progress they are making with regard to their own strategy and how it is faring on the measurements they have outlined to determine our success. It is their strategy, their benchmarks. If they are not being met, the administration should explain to the American people why. If no adequate explanation exists, those responsible must be held accountable. That is the way you run any business or any State, and that is the least we can expect when waging war.

These benchmarks are crucial to gauging our progress and are vital to achieving our success. They were included in an unclassified document provided to the Congress this last week, the title of which is "Transitional Readiness Assessment." It provides seven different measurements to determine how we are doing in Iraq: first, overall readiness; second, the number of Iraqi personnel; third, their command and control capability; fourth, the level and effectiveness of their training; fifth, the sustainment and logistics of those Iraqi units; sixth, the level of their equipment; and seventh, the quality of their leadership.

It is vitally important that we share our progress or lack thereof in meeting these objectives with the American

people. The American people are paying for this conflict with their money and their blood. They deserve to know how we are doing.

One of the challenges of any military effort is to build and maintain public support. To date, the administration has provided rosy assessments that conflict so clearly with the reports from Iraq and the images on television. It is no surprise that the public's patience is growing thin.

The American people can withstand adversity. What they won't stand for—and rightfully so—is being kept in the dark or being misled. That is why it is so critical that we provide the American people with an accurate assessment of our current situation, to plan for our success and let our people know and let them evaluate the progress we are achieving toward making that success.

I hope this amendment can be a bipartisan one. It seeks to achieve the twin goals of accountability and candor that I have heard embraced by our colleagues from both sides of the aisle.

In addition to this amendment, I have also introduced an amendment to provide our troops fighting in Iraq with the equipment they need in the field and the support their families deserve at home.

The Army has chronically underestimated—nine consecutive times, in fact—the need for up-armored vehicles in the Iraqi theater. Nine consecutive times they have gotten it wrong. They no longer deserve the benefit of the doubt. Regrettably, Walter Reed Hospital and our other military hospitals in this Nation are filled with too many of the young men and women who have paid the consequence for these errors. We must do everything humanly possible to make sure no further errors take place.

My armor amendment will provide enough funding to rebuild the Army stocks of up-armored HMMWVs as well as the armored vehicles used for cargo and troop transportation. With it, the military's depleted stock of armored vehicles will be made whole, ensuring that all of our troops have the protection they need while serving in both Iraq and Afghanistan—no more pleas to end hillbilly armor. One of the lessons learned in Iraq, along with the tragic Hurricane Katrina, is that when lives are at stake, it is incumbent upon us to err on the side of doing more rather than less. Let us get it right this time.

For the families of our loved ones serving in harm's way, we must ensure that no one faces financial hardship because of their service overseas. Yet there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that the financial rights of service men and women are being abused or ignored. That must stop.

Guard members who are called to active duty often face what I call a patriot penalty—a pay cut representing the difference between their civilian and Active-Duty pay. As a result, many families struggle to meet their mortgage payments or pay their heating