

the amendment that is pending before us.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 12:30 having arrived, the Senate will now stand in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:45 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. SUNUNU).

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2007—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, the distinguished Democratic leader seeks recognition now. I ask unanimous consent that the majority leader be recognized immediately following Senator REID.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I will at an appropriate time send an amendment to the desk. The amendment will read as follows:

At the appropriate place insert the following:

It is the sense of the Senate on the Need for a New Direction in Iraq Policy and in the Civilian Leadership of the Department of Defense.

Here are the findings.

1. U.S. forces have served honorably and courageously in Iraq, with over 2,600 brave Americans having made the ultimate sacrifice and over 20,000 wounded.

2. The current "stay the course" policy in Iraq has made America less secure, reduced the readiness of our troops, and burdened America's taxpayers with over \$300 billion in additional debt.

3. With weekly attacks against American and Iraqi troops at their highest levels since the start of the war, and sectarian violence intensifying, it is clear that staying the course in Iraq is not a strategy for success.

Therefore, it is the sense of the Senate that:

1. Our troops deserve and the American people expect the Bush Administration to provide competent civilian leadership and a true strategy for success in Iraq.

2. President Bush needs to change course in Iraq to provide a strategy for success. One indication of a change of course would be to replace the current Secretary of Defense.

In war, strategy is the searchlight that illuminates the way ahead. In its absence, the U.S. military would fight hard and well but blindly and the noble sacrifices of soldiers would be undercut by the lack of thoughtful leadership at the top that soberly assessed the realities of the situation and constructed a response.

That is a direct quote from a book called "Fiasco," which was written by Washington Post senior Pentagon correspondent, Thomas Ricks. The quote concerns a war and a Secretary of Defense I would like to talk about today. The war is Iraq, the Secretary of Defense is Donald Rumsfeld.

For me, it was not a quick or easy decision to come to the floor to demand that President Bush replace Secretary Rumsfeld. I have always held the opinion that the President of the United States deserves ample leeway in determining who serves in his Cabinet. Regrettably, after 5 years of mismanagement and mistakes in Iraq that have made America less safe, the time for that leeway has passed. So, today, as I have indicated, I will offer an amendment expressing the sense of the Senate that President Bush replace Secretary Rumsfeld immediately.

This amendment is bigger than Donald Rumsfeld. This is about changing course in Iraq and the President demonstrating to the American people he understands America cannot stay the course when the present course is taking our country in the wrong direction. The United States currently has about 140,000 soldiers serving in far away Iraq. Thousands have served coming from Nevada. Hundreds are there right now. They are bravely performing their jobs, but it is time for the President to do his and chart a new direction in that far away land called Iraq.

In the last month, scores of U.S. soldiers and marines have been killed. Hundreds of U.S. troops have been wounded. More than a thousand Iraqis have been killed. American taxpayers have lost another \$12 billion to this mismanaged war. The totals for this conflict now approach 2,700 Americans killed and over 20,000 Americans wounded. A third of these wounded soldiers and marines are missing arms, legs, eyes. They are paralyzed or coping with brain injuries, and over \$300 billion of debt already has been expended for which the American taxpayer must foot the bill.

Today, because of Iraq, the readiness of our troops has declined to levels not seen since Vietnam. There is not a single Army nondeployed combat brigade that is currently prepared to meet its wartime mission. I repeat, not a single nondeployed combat brigade is currently prepared to meet its wartime mission. And the Chief of the National Guard has said the Guard is "even further behind or in an even more dire situation than the Army."

In peacetime such a state of our military would be disturbing. At a time of war, this is unacceptable. The facts on the ground do not lie. All the speeches by President Bush, all the speeches by the Vice President, all the speeches by Secretary Rumsfeld do not change what is taking place on the ground in that desert called Iraq. The current course in Iraq is not working, not for our military, not for the Iraqi people, and not for our security.

Five years after the attacks of September 11, 2001, America is not as safe as it needs to be. Secretary Rumsfeld and the Bush White House have mastered the politics of national security, but as we have seen day after day, week after week, month after month, in Iraq they have failed to do what it takes to make America safe.

This is not a personal attack. I am not looking to pick a fight with Secretary Rumsfeld or the President of the United States, but it is about making America as safe as we can and should be. Secretary Rumsfeld's failed track record is well documented, and the consequences of his mismanagement on American national security are well known. Secretary Rumsfeld was a leading participant in the administration's cherry-picking and manipulation of intelligence in the run-up to the war, exaggerating Iraq's connections to al-Qaida and the threat posed by its weapons of mass destruction—which didn't exist.

As a result of his and others' actions, our Nation was rushed to war based on faulty facts, and the Pentagon is now spending \$20 million on a public relations campaign to rebrand the war to the American people. New money, \$20 million—public relations.

Secretary Rumsfeld was one of those who ignored the advice of the uniformed military and went into battle in Iraq with too few troops and no plan—no plan to win the peace. As a result, the insurgency was able to gain a foothold in Iraq, and now even the Pentagon is forced to conclude that civil and sectarian strife threatens our troops and the future of the country of Iraq. Secretary Rumsfeld was the one who directed disbanding the Iraqi Army and purging of all Baath Party officials from the Iraqi Government. His lack of preparation delayed the training of Iraqi security forces for untold time.

As a result, here we are, more than 3 years later, with not a single Iraqi Army battalion that can operate independently—not one. We should remember the Secretary's mistakes are not all buried in the past. Just last week he demonstrated again he is not the man for the job. As he spoke to the American Legion this became very clear. His remarks were wrong, they were unnecessary, and they were a slap in the face to every American.

Rumsfeld's speech was filled with reckless, irresponsible assertions, but the most insulting and misguided words compared the critics of the Bush administration's Iraq policy to those who appeased the Nazis, leading to World War II—a statement made by our Secretary of Defense. These assertions were offensive and indicative of a Secretary of Defense who has lost his way, who is not capable of overseeing America's defense or certainly a new direction in Iraq; who is more concerned, it seems, with the Bush administration's political fortunes than the safety and security of the American people; and who must be replaced.

Keith Olbermann of NBC observed, after Rumsfeld's comments, as follows:

[His speech] did not merely serve to impugn the morality or intelligence—indeed the loyalty—of the majority of Americans who oppose the transient occupants of the highest offices in the land. Worse, still, it credits those same transient occupants—our