Our forces in the field are, of course, still facing some daunting challenges and a brutal, inhumane foe prepared to blow themselves up to make a point, to kill others, hating us and others more than they love their own lives. But the plain truth is that Iraq in this month, July 2007, is a very different and better place than Iraq in January or February of 2000, and it is because of the so-called surge counteroffensive strategy. Those who refuse to recognize that change and nonetheless go forward with the same policies of defeat and withdrawal that they have been talking about for months have, I would say respectfully, closed their eyes, not to mention their heads, to the reality of what is actually happening on the ground in Iraq.

General Petraeus has persistently appealed to us to have some patience, to not rush to judgment about the success or failure of a new surge strategy. It is only right that we do so. But instead of respecting those pleas, withholding our judgment, and remaining true to what we ourselves put into the supplemental appropriations bill, which was a requirement for an interim report this week and a full report on paper about the benchmarks and in person by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker in September, instead of waiting for that to happen, I regret that some of my colleagues have decided to go ahead and submit these amendments which, to me, represent the continuation of a longtime legislative trench warfare against our presence in Iraq no matter what the facts on the ground there are. Rather than giving General Petraeus and his troops a fair chance to succeed—and it is not just for them, it is for us—I regret that efforts will be made here to undermine our strategy, which is now a successful strategy in Iraq, to dictate when, where, and against whom our soldiers can fight and when we should get out.

I suppose this would be justified if somebody concluded that the war was lost in Iraq. The war is not lost in Iraq. In fact, now American and Iraqi security forces are winning. The enemy is on the run in Iraq. But here in Congress, in Washington, we seem to be—or some Members seem to be on the run—chased, I fear, by public-opinion polls.

I know the American people are frustrated. I understand that. I know what they see every night on the TV, the suicide bombs. I know how much they want their loved ones to come home. No one wants that more than we do here. But the consequences of doing that would be a disaster for Iraq, the Middle East, and for us because the victors would be Iran and al-Qaida, our two most dangerous enemies in the world today, and trust me, they would follow us back here to this country.

I said one might pursue a policy of changing course, directing a retreat, a withdrawal, accepting defeat if one thought the war was lost. The war is not lost. In fact, I will say to my colleagues today that this war in Iraq will never be lost by our military on the ground in Iraq. The war in Iraq can only be lost with the loss of political will here at home and, perhaps, with the loss of political will in Iraq. But that story is not finished yet.

Perhaps there are some who would say the war is not lost but it is not worth winning. I think we have to think of the consequences of defeat. I know that in the midst of the consequences of defeat are a victory for Iran and al-Qaida, chaos in Iraq, slaughter that will probably begin to look like genocide, instability in the region, and the danger that we will be forced to send our troops back into the region in greater numbers to fight a more difficult war.

I think the amendments on Iraq to be offered on this Department of Defense bill are mistaken. What are the alternatives my colleagues are going to propose in these amendments? One of the amendments would demand a total withdrawal of American troops from Iraq as quickly as possible. Its sponsors argue that we can continue to fight al-Qaida in Iraq and defend our other key interests in the Middle East by operating from bases elsewhere there. With all due respect, this is fantasy.

As my friend, Senator LUGAR, pointed out a short while ago, a complete American withdrawal from Iraq is likely to have devastating consequences for American national security. Everyone knows Senator LUGAR is a skeptic about our strategy and events in Iraq. Yet, in his words, a complete withdrawal from Iraq would:

> Compound the risks of a wider regional conflict. It would be a severe blow to U.S. credibility that would make nations in the region far less likely to cooperate with us. It would expose Iraqis who have worked with us to retribution, and it would also be a signal that the United States was abandoning efforts to prevent Iraqi territory from being used as a terrorist base.

So spoke the distinguished Senator from Indiana, Mr. LUGAR.

Another amendment would keep some forces in Iraq, pull most forces out by next April 1. Their numbers would be dramatically reduced and the mission dramatically redefined.

Some argue that American soldiers should withdraw from Iraq's cities and instead focus on the training of Iraqi forces, targeting counterterrorism, and protecting the remaining American troops there. Let me say that is a vision I would embrace for the future but not as a substitute for the surge counteroffensive strategy we are following now but as a consequence of a successful implementation of that strategy, for if we in this Chamber and in Congress mandate the withdrawal of our troops down to a core group with a new mission before the Iraqi security forces are ready to provide security, we are going back to the exact strategy some describe as the Rumsfeld strategy which didn't work, which was roundly condemned by most people in both parties over a period of years.

I repeat my confidence that the number of American troops will be reduced, but it will be reduced best when it is reduced as a result of the successful implementation of the surge strategy as carried out heroically by American forces.

I conclude with these words: Our responsibilities in this Chamber ultimately do not allow us to be guided by our frustrations or even by public-opinion polls when we respectfully believe those public-opinion polls do not reflect what is best for our Nation. We were elected to lead. We were elected to see beyond the next election, to do what is best for the next generation of Americans. We were elected to defend our beloved country, its security, and its values. All of that is on the line in Iraq today.

So I appeal to my colleagues, let's not undercut our troops and legislate a defeat in Iraq where none is occurring now, where hope is strong, where the momentum is, in fact, on our side. If you question that, at least show the fairness and respect for General Petraeus, Ambassador Crocker, and all the people working for us there to wait until September, which is what we said we would do, until we take a serious look at these amendments. If we go down the path the amendments entice us toward, what awaits us is an emboldened Iran, a strengthened al-Qaida, a failed Iraq that will become not just a killing field but will destabilize the entire Middle East and also, I fear, imperil our security here at home.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I believe I have 15 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized.

IRAQ POLICY

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I appreciate being recognized. Before my good friend, Senator LIEBERMAN, departs the floor, I will make one observation about him that I think needs to be said. This winning/losing is a big part of wars; it is a big part of politics. Everybody wants to win, and people are afraid to lose. But I have found in life there are some things that are worth fighting for and willing to lose your job over, and to me the policies in Iraq fall into that category because it is much more important in my election that we get it right in Iraq, and from Senator LIEBERMAN's point of view—I don't think I have seen in modern politics anyone more committed to their beliefs than Senator LIEBERMAN when it comes to a foreign policy issue like Iraq. We all know the story of his last election, how he basically lost a primary because he refused to give in to the forces on the left when it came to the war on terror policies, particularly

Iraq. He literally risked losing his job, lost the primary, and in the end prevailed. I think he prevailed because the good people of Connecticut saw in Senator LIEBERMAN a man committed to his ideas, and his ideas he was committed to were bigger than himself. They may not have agreed with Senator LIEBERMAN about his policies on Iraq, but they sure admired what they saw in the man, and that is someone who was clearly putting the country's interests ahead of their own. There is not enough of that. The only group I can say with certainty that is doing the same thing is the men and women in Iraq.

On the Fourth of July this year, last week, I was in Iraq, in Baghdad for my sixth or seventh visit. This was a special visit. I got to be on the ground in Iraq on the Fourth of July, our Independence Day, and be part of a ceremony put on by General Petraeus's staff where he had 580-plus people reenlist. It was the largest reenlistment ceremony in a war zone in history, General Petraeus said. Right after the reenlistment ceremony, we had 160-plus American soldiers who became naturalized citizens. It was something to behold. To be in that former Saddam palace and be around those brave young men and women who are signing up to do it in Iraq yet again and who are becoming American citizens, literally risking their lives to do so, was inspiring.

This debate we are about to enter into is not about anyone's patriotism. My colleagues here, we are friends politically one day and we are on the other side the next. That is the nature of politics. It is never about respect for the person. I do have respect for my colleagues, and I hope the same is said of me. It is about our judgment. When I question your judgment and you question mine, that is part of the political process. Our judgments need to be tested. The decision we make now affects many people. It affects the long-term future of our country. It affects the soldiers in harm's way. Our judgment will be tested by the next election, and it will be tested by the eyes of history.

So here is what I believe we need to do in terms of Iraq policy for the immediate future. We need to listen very closely to what is being said in theater by our generals and by our enemy. Mr. Zawahiri, the second in command of al-Qaida, is not in Iraq, but he issued a statement—I think it was last Thursday—it was about an hour-long statement, and it was basically a call to not lose hope for al-Qaida in Iraq. He was acknowledging that you are under strain and stress, that you are really being pounded, but hang in there because your cause is great, and he encouraged everyone who is sympathetic to al-Qaida to run to Iraq now to beat us because our ideas are just abhorrent to their way of life.

The idea of being tolerant to different religions and views of religion is an absolute mortal sin in the eyes of al-Qaida. The idea of a woman having a say about her child is something they are just not going to have any part of. So I thought it was odd that he would make this hour-long call for reinforcements. Why was he doing that?

The reason he chose to make that statement is because the new strategy being employed now in Iraq is working against al-Qaida. I don't want to overstate it. The main reason al-Qaida is losing ground in Iraq has more to do about them than us. Al-Qaida dramatically overplayed their hand. Wherever they occupied a region in the Sunni part of Iraq, they tremendously overplayed their hand. During this debate, I will give some illustrations of some of the brutal, vicious things they did to folks living in Iraq once they were under al-Qaida control, and the Sunnis in Iraq basically are fed up with al-Qaida. They have had a taste of what al-Qaida offers them, and they have said no thanks. They have rejected al-Qaida's view of how to live one's life and how to raise one's children.

Lucky for us the President made a change in strategy—which should have happened years ago—where we are putting additional combat capability into the Iraqi theater. This rejection of al-Qaida by the Sunni leadership and the Sunni population came at a time where we have additional combat capability to reinforce that rejection. No matter what you think about the surge, it is undeniable that there have been new alliances formed between Sunni Iraqis and coalition forces in areas previously controlled by al-Qaida; and al-Qaida, as Senator LIEBERMAN said, is literally on the run, but they are still engaging in suicide bombing attacks and trying to create as much carnage as possible in Iraq. Where they used to exist in Anbar, they exist no longer in any force. They are isolated now. Anbar, the province dominated by the Sunni Iraqis, is a transformed region in terms of al-Qaida operations. The break of the sheik from the al-Qaida leadership and joining with the coalition forces has been a transforming event.

What can al-Qaida do? They moved to Diyala when the population sided with us, and their safe haven was denied. They went to the Diyala Province. We are doing the same thing there as we did in Anbar: making alliances with local Sunni leaders and some Shia. The big loser is al-Qaida. That is why last week Zawahiri made a call to his brothers in arms: Don't leave the fight; too much is at risk; hang in there, we will send reinforcements if we can.

He made this observation—I will get the quote later in the debate. He said the winds were blowing in our favor in Washington.

Now, one of the highest ranking al-Qaida leaders in the world was trying to inspire his troops by saying: No matter how much you are losing ground in Iraq, help may be coming from Washington. The question for this body is, do we want to be the cavalry for al-Qaida? If things are left the way they are now, and we gave General Petraeus the time and the resources and our total commitment, there is no doubt in my mind that, militarily, we can destroy al-Qaida in Iraq. Why? Because the Iraqi people, particularly the Sunnis, have had a taste of that lifestyle, and they have said no. All they need is additional capacity to defeat al-Qaida. That additional capacity has been provided by the surge. The additional military capability that exists now has made a world of difference. The strategy is fundamentally different.

Before, for almost 4 years, we had been behind walls trying to train the Iraqi Army and police, and getting in firefights and coming back when it was over. General Petraeus, with additional military personnel, has created joint security stations all over neighborhoods where we are living with the Iraqi Army and police, training them day in and day out. We are sleeping with them in terms of staying overnight, and we are stakeholders of that area. Not only are we helping clear the area, we are holding that area and we are having more combat capability. The surge provides that for every combat troop available to do operations before the surge, we have an additional soldier now. That has allowed us to go into areas that we previously could not go into to clear, hold, stay, and live with the Iraqi Army and police force and train them day in and day out. It is truly working.

It is my hope that as we get into this debate we will understand that if we go back to the old strategy of withdrawing behind walls, the alliances that have been formed between the Sunni leadership in Iraq and the coalition forces and the central government will be destroyed. We have put tanks around Sunni sheiks' homes. We have created joint security stations in neighborhoods that have previously been occupied by al-Qaida. It is working. If we withdraw, all of those people who formed these alliances will be at risk. I think al-Qaida will emerge again stronger.

One thing is clear to me. The old strategy of just training and staying behind walls failed. The new strategy of getting into the fight, getting out into the neighborhoods, holding territory with additional combat capability, and forming new transforming alliances is working.

Senator LEVIN, a dear friend, wants to say we are going to leave in March of 2008, or 120 days from now—I cannot remember the wording of the amendment. Basically, it is a statement by the Congress that we are going to undo the surge, the surge comes to an end, we begin to leave. We will leave a force behind that will do a couple things—train the Iraqi Army and police force. We tried that for 4 years. Training during a war is a little different than training when you are not at war. We train our soldiers at home, but they

are not in a wartime situation while they are being trained. The people in Iraq are being trained and fighting at the same time. They need more than training, they need combat capability that is nonexistent on their part.

That is a democracy that is less than 4 years old. Their constitution is less than 18 months old. The Iraqi Army and the police force, 4 years ago, was there to support the dictator, not democracy. So if you expect, from the ashes of the dictatorship, a functioning democracy in 4 years, I think you are sadly mistaken. It took us 11 years to write our own Constitution.

Why am I hopeful that we can still win in Iraq? No. 1, there is evidence with the new strategy that we can defeat and destroy al-Qaida in Iraq. No. 2, every time an Iraqi soldier is killed or a policeman is murdered, someone takes their place. Every time a judge is assassinated, somebody else comes along and says, ''I'll be a judge.'' What more can you ask? We are losing troops, and it is heartbreaking. The enemy that we are fighting understands that Americans don't like the taste of war—and that is an asset, not a liability. We are not a warring people. It is not our nature as a people to go to other places and take land from people and dominate their life. It is our nature to allow people to chart their own destiny and to be partners economically, while the enemy wants no part of that.

So what I hope we will do is take these amendments that will come to the floor and ask ourselves one simple question: If this amendment passes, what affect does it have on our military commanders to execute this new strategy that is clearly working? If this amendment passes, how does it affect al-Qaida in Iraq and throughout the world? What affect would it have on the voices of moderation that are giving their own lives to change their own country in Iraq? If this amendment passes, how does it affect Iran?

The one thing I learned from this last trip is that al-Qaida overplayed their hand, and we are taking advantage of it. Iran is trying to destabilize Iraq now more than ever. Don't mistake these new alliances between coalition forces and Sunni Iraqis to be a political reconciliation. The bad news from my trip is that the Iraqi Government is paralyzed, the political leadership in Iraq—Sunni, Shia, and Kurd—are unable to get their act together at this point. New elections would be good for the Sunnis.

Mr. President, how much time do I have?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Twenty seconds.

Mr. GRAHAM. We will talk more about this. The good news is, the surge is al-Qaida's worst nightmare. They have been rejected by the Sunnis in Iraq, and if we stay on them, we can destroy al-Qaida in Iraq. The bad news is, the current political infrastructure in Iraq is incapable of making the hard decisions for the moment. We have to think of new ways to push them.

There is much more to follow.

I yield the floor.

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

TRIBUTE TO ALEX GEORGE, SR.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise for a brief period of time to pay tribute to a Pennsylvanian who just passed away this past week, a constituent of mine whose family I have known for many years. I think he is like a lot of people in our communities and in our States who lead lives of service and struggle and achievement, and often their lives are not the subject of big stories and headlines.

When I think of Alex George, Sr.—who is the father of Bill George, or William George, who is the president of the AFL–CIO in Pennsylvania—I think of those people who grew up in parts of western Pennsylvania, where over many generations steel was the foundation of the economy, and in places like where Mr. George lived, Aliquippa, PA, which is a very strong community that had a thriving steel industry that is now largely gone from the city and that community. It is not nearly what it was when thousands of people were employed.

Alex George, like a lot of Pennsylvanians and, frankly, a lot of Americans, lived a life of triumph where he had to overcome difficulties in his own life, and then he became a union leader of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steelworkers, which was the forerunner, of course, of the modern day Steelworkers Union that his son, Bill George, joined many years later. We think of his life today and what he did for the labor movement of western Pennsylvania, and Pennsylvania generally, and also what he did as a law enforcement officer. He was a police officer as well in his later years.

I rise briefly to pay tribute to him and his life of work for the benefit of labor, doing everything possible to make sure they have lives that are rewarded, in the sense that they are allowed to organize and allowed to have the opportunity to have the dignity of their labor be part of the fabric of their lives. We pay tribute to Alex George today and the many others who built the middle class in America. He is the proud son of Aliquippa, PA.

In a special way, I express my condolences to the entire George family, and especially Bill George, president of the AFL–CIO of Pennsylvania. Alex George leaves behind three sons: Bill, who I have mentioned, Robert, and Alex, Jr., as well as nine grandchildren and many great-grandchildren. In the spirit of condolence, but also in the spirit of tribute, I pay tribute to Alex George and the legacy he leaves behind for the George family and for the labor family of Pennsylvania.

I yield the floor and 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.

Mrs. MURRAY. 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.

MILITARY READINESS CHALLENGES

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, our country is home to some of the finest fighting forces in the world, and we can all be very proud of that fact. We need our military to be the best trained, the best equipped, and the most prepared force on the planet. Tragically, however, the President's war in Iraq and his use of extended deployments is undermining our military's readiness today.

The current deployment schedule hurts our ability to respond to threats around the world, it causes our servicemembers to leave the military service early, it weakens our ability to respond to disasters at home, it unfairly burdens family members, and it intensifies the combat stress our servicemembers experience.

We need to rebuild our military, and the first step is giving our fighting men and women the time they need at home to prepare and train for their next mission.

Today I rise to address the readiness challenges that threaten our military strength and ultimately our Nation's security.

More than 4 years into the war in Iraq, our troops are stretched thin, our equipment is deteriorating, and the patience of our Nation is wearing thin. We have seen 3,600 servicemembers die, thousands upon thousands more have been injured, and month after month our fighting men and women are pushing harder and harder. Troops leave loved ones for months and years and put their lives on the line without complaint. We owe them the best treatment and the best training possible.

Unfortunately, the Bush administration has fallen short in those areas. One of the major problems for our troops, for their families, and their communities is the growing gap between the time troops spend in battle versus the time they spend at home. This gap is alarming, it is disheartening, and it is a disservice to the brave men and women who put themselves in harm's way each and every day.

Sadly, our forces are being burned out. Many of our troops are on their third or even their fourth tour in Iraq and Afghanistan. Months ago, the Department of Defense announced that their tours would be extended from 12 months to 15 months. And on top of all that, they are not receiving the necessary time at home before they are sent back to battle.