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CBS News

FACE THE NATION

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**GUESTS: Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM (R-SC)
Armed Services Committee**

**Senator JACK REED (D-RI)
Armed Services Committee**

**Ms. ANA MARIE COX
Washington Editor, Time.com**

**Mr. DOYLE McMANUS
Washington Bureau Chief, Los Angeles Times**

**Mr. ROGER SIMON
Chief Political Columnist, Politico**

MODERATOR/PANELIST: Mr. Chip Reid – CBS News

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**FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
(202)-457-4481**

CHIP REID, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, five years into the war in Iraq, are we any safer? Earlier this morning, Baghdad's heavily fortified green zone, which houses the US embassy and the Iraqi Parliament, came under two separate barrages of mortar or rocket fire. All this comes even as President Bush marked the fifth anniversary of the war last week by saying that the surge strategy has produced dramatic results. But what about political reconciliation? How long will US troops have to stay there? Has the war been worth the cost in lives and money? All questions for Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, who just returned from the region; and Senator Jack Reed, Democrat of Rhode Island, who has been there many times.

Then we'll talk about all the week's political news with Ana Marie Cox of time.com, Roger Simon of Politico and Doyle McManus of the Los Angeles Times. Iraq five years after on FACE THE NATION.

Announcer: FACE THE NATION, with chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now, from Washington, substituting for Bob Schieffer, CBS News Capitol Hill correspondent Chip Reid.

REID: Welcome again to the broadcast. Bob Schieffer is off this morning.

Joining us now from Clemson, South Carolina, Senator Lindsey Graham. With us here in the studio, Senator Jack Reed.

Senator JACK REED (Democrat, Rhode Island; Armed Services Committee): Chip.

REID: Thank you both for being with us.

Senator Graham, let's start right off with you with a prediction that you made...

Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM (Republican South Carolina; Armed Services Committee): Yeah.

REID: ...on this program after you came back from Iraq, from one of your many trips to Iraq. You've both made 11 trips to Iraq. This was last fall.

Sen. GRAHAM: Yeah.

REID: Let's listen to that.

Sen. GRAHAM: (September 2, 2007) I'll make a prediction on your show: In a matter of weeks we're going to have a major breakthrough in Baghdad on items of political reconciliation, the benchmarks because the Iraqi people are putting pressure on their politicians.

REID: Now, you went on to say that we're, quote, "about to turn a corner in Iraq." Now, you just returned from Iraq again. Were you right?

Sen. GRAHAM: Yeah. Yeah.

REID: Has there been a major breakthrough? Have we turned the corner in Iraq?

Sen. GRAHAM: Oh, yeah, I think so. We're a long way to go. There's a big battle brewing in Mosul, and the south in Iraq is very unsettled. Their Shia militia's basically running the show, and Iran is stepping up its efforts to destabilize Iraq, because I think they see us winning. But the big picture for me is I'm incredibly pleased with the performance of our troops and General Petraeus.

On the political front, we've had the de-Baathification law passed. What does that mean? That means members of the Baath Party, who ruled the country under Saddam Hussein, are now allowed to get some of their jobs back. That means the Shias and the Kurds are saying to the Sunnis, 'come back in and help us run the country.' They passed a \$48 billion budget where every group in Iraq gets to share the oil resources. There was an amnesty law telling the prisoners in Iraq that 'we're going to let some of you go; go back home, stop fighting, help build the new Iraq.' And most important of all, we're going to have provincial elections in October. The Sunnis boycotted the election in 2005, and everywhere I went in Anbar province the Sunnis are ready to vote and be part of democracy. So there's been major political breakthroughs.

Economically, oil revenues are up by 50 percent, oil production has doubled, inflation has gone from 66 to five. Sectarian violence is down by 90 percent, our casualties are way down. We got a long way to go, but I believe the surge has worked on all fronts.

REID: OK. Senator Jack Reed, you've opposed this war from the beginning, and he's saying not only is the surge working militarily, but politically we have turned the corner in Iraq.

Sen. REED: Well, the problem with Iraq is every time you turn a corner, there's another corner. And I don't think politically that they've made the progress they have to make. The reconciliation law that Senator Graham talked about was passed, but according to my last trip and talking to Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus, it's up to implementation. That law could be used either to really bring Sunnis back into government or actually, ironically and perversely, to purge them from the government. The central government's not functioning effectively. And one of the reasons, I think, is they feel they have as much time as they need because our forces are there and proponents who say they want to keep them there for 100 years just reinforce the notion in Baghdad that they don't have to make these tough political decisions. And if they do make them legislatively, they really don't have to implement them.

REID: So you believe we do need...

Sen. REED: So we have a long way to go.

REID: You believe we do need to start pulling out troops, but you don't necessarily believe with the kind of time line that Clinton and Obama are talking about here, where one brigade every month once they get in.

Sen. REED: I think we have to have a thorough, thoughtful and deliberate path out of the country. The timing will depend upon the facts on the ground. But it has to be deliberate, it has to be the policy and it has to be something that doesn't start and stop. It has to go forward. And I think there's two major reasons. First, it will, I think, put more pressure on the Iraqi government

to do what they must do, not simply to pass laws but to actually make them work. And, you know, for many years now there's been predictions that next week or two weeks from now the Iraqis are going to really get their political act in order. But they haven't done it yet.

And second, we're putting huge strain on our military forces, the Army and the Marine Corps. We've got to send a signal that they can't keep going a treadmill in and out of Iraq. And the other point, I would say, is the economy is showing the effects of this effort over there, this billion dollar effort.

REID: Senator Graham, if there is a President Clinton or a President Barack Obama next year and he or she actually does what they've said they're going to do, which is pull one to two brigades out every month and get them all out within 16 months or so, what do you predict would happen in Iraq?

Sen. GRAHAM: Complete disaster. Senator Reed is a good buddy, but he's been wrong the whole time, in my opinion. The way he changed Iraq after four years of mismanagement--and I've been on your show many times, this show, talking about the Rumsfeld strategy failing. We've finally got it right. By adding additional combat power, we've given the Iraqis a chance to turn their country around. And the biggest news of all from the surge is that Iraqi Muslims have turned on al-Qaeda. The biggest loser of the surge is al-Qaeda in Iraq. They've got their brains pounded out. They're greatly diminished, but not defeated. But if you started announcing the withdrawal, an arbitrary withdrawal from Iraq, you would freeze political progress, you would ladder a al-Qaeda get back off the mat, you would embolden Iran even more. Iran is very afraid of this working out well. They don't want a representative democracy on their border because they're a theocracy dictatorship. You would unleash all the forces we have suppressed and, in my opinion, we would be going back to this region with a bigger war, and that will be a defining difference in this election.

I want to win in Iraq. I believe we can win in Iraq. The model we've created is leading to success and will eventually lead to victory. If we undercut it, we're going to go backward, not forward.

REID: But how long would you give for it? I know everybody quotes Senator McCain as saying 100 years. Obviously...

Sen. GRAHAM: Right.

REID: ...he wasn't talking about combat for 100 years.

Sen. GRAHAM: Right. Right.

REID: But how long would you foresee combat where American troops are fighting and dying in large numbers? Five years? Ten years? More?

Sen. GRAHAM: What--the casualty rate in March of last year was 81 American deaths. This year, it's going to be dramatically less in March, but every death really hurts. It really hurts. I know the sacrifices of the great. The dividends of winning for our country are enormous. A stable, functioning government that turns on al-Qaeda, denies them a safe haven, aligned with us and would be a buffer to Iran is worth everything to us because it makes us safer. Mosul is a great

battle, Chip, between the remnants of al-Qaeda and coalition and Iraqi forces. In the Mosul, this time around, the Iraqis are in the lead. So I think by the end of this year, we will be somewhere around 100,000 troops, and most of the fighting will be done by the Iraqis with us in over watch. They've added 100,000 troops since the surge began to the Iraqi army. They're performing much better, so I'm very optimistic our casualties will go down and stay down, and the Iraqis will be out in the lead if we continue the model we have.

REID: Senator Reed?

Sen. REED: Well, the predictions of military success have been made before. I think this is--this strategy is not the Rumsfeld strategy, it was George Bush and Dick Cheney and John McCain and others going into Iraq under pretenses that later proved to be significantly wrong. And then the strategy overall has deflected our attention from Pakistan, Afghanistan, where al-Qaeda, bin Laden is actually located. We've seen the rise of Iran in the region. They, I think, are in a situation now where they are exploiting the situation we have. And with respect to a government in Baghdad that is, you know, more friendly to us than to the Iranians, you know, when we go in--Senator Graham and myself--we have to basically slip in the country. Ahmadinejad came in in a sport jacket and a motor cavalcade.

This is a situation ultimately that has to be won by the Iraqis, not by the United States, not by our troops, but by political decisions the Iraqi government has to make. The longer they feel we will take the lead, the longer they feel that we are going to be there indefinitely, and when you talk about 100 years, even if it's symbolic, that sends the message, 'You don't have to do anything that's tough, the tough things we'll do.'

REID: Senator Reed...

Sen. REED: And that's the wrong message.

REID: The cost of the war. Democrats have really been harping on that recently, trying to tie it to the economy, Barack Obama even suggesting that it's costing the average family more than \$1,000 a year, and that it's one of the reasons we're having such economic difficulties right now. Do you buy that argument?

Sen. REED: I think I do. We've spent over \$500 billion in direct spending in Iraq. That's a \$500 billion stimulus package...

REID: And that's 10 times more than the president predicted this war would cost.

Sen. REED: Ten times more. And in fact, the indirect cost is probably trillions of dollars, as Professor Stiglitz has pointed out. That's a \$500 billion stimulus package for Iraq. We're barely scraping together a stimulus package now of \$160 billion to this country. The people, the connections are there, the price of gasoline. There are many factors, but certainly one factor is this instability within the region.

REID: Senator Graham, is the--is the war dragging our economy down?

Sen. GRAHAM: The war is a sacrifice this country is making to make us safer. It has been mismanaged. But let me tell you the cost of losing. If al-Qaeda could claim victory in Iraq, then the price to be paid by this country's enormous. What would we all give to go back in time after the Soviets left Afghanistan and suppress the Taliban? Well, we've got a chance in Iraq to change the fortunes of the Mideast and to make us more safe. The good news for me out of all of this surge activity is that the Muslims in Iraq have listened to al-Qaeda, have actually experienced their agenda and their lifestyle for a brief period because of a lack of security, and they've told al-Qaeda to go to hell.

So we got a chance, my friend, to be able to defeat al-Qaeda in Iraq and to create a buffer to Iran. I've been to Iraq many times, and I can assure you the Iraqi people do not want to be dominated by Iran. And the Iranian activity in killing Americans is going up by the day because they are threatened by success in Iraq, and we need to let the Iranians know that you're not going to be the cancer of the Mideast without consequences. You're not going to destroy Israel by supporting Hamas, you're not going to destroy Lebanon by supporting Hezbollah, and you're not going to destroy our will to win in Iraq, and you do all this at your own peril.

REID: Senator Graham, quickly, I've got to ask you this. We don't have much time left, but you are with McCain, Senator McCain everywhere: in Iraq, on the Senate floor, on the campaign trail.

Sen. GRAHAM: Yes. Right, right. Right.

REID: Every time I see him, you're there. Lot of people say, 'Wow, you know, what a good vice presidential choice he would be.' Have you had any conversations with him about who his running mate would be, and has your name ever come up in those conversations?

Sen. GRAHAM: He will be getting a committee together to form a search for a good vice president, and I'll be the first to say that I love John McCain and I add nothing to this ticket. I want him to be president, and I want to stay in the Senate, like my predecessors, and live a long life, I hope.

REID: Jack Reed, you've been mentioned, to round out the Clinton or Obama ticket with some military prowess. Have you been approached at all? Any feelers? Would you be interested?

Sen. REED: I've not been approached. I'm not interested. I hope to serve with--in the United States Senate for the people of Rhode Island.

REID: OK. Great. We'll be back in just one minute. Thank you both for joining us.

Sen. REED: Thank you. Thanks, Lindsey.

Sen. GRAHAM: Thank you.

(Announcements)

REID: With us now for a campaign quick check: Ana Marie Cox, Washington editor of time.com; Roger Simon, chief political columnist for Politico; and Doyle McManus, Washington bureau chief of the Los Angeles Times. Thank you all for being here.

Roger, let's start with you. Before we get into the wild ride this campaign has been this week--I compare it to riding, what is it, Magic Mountain, that roller coaster you ride in the dark and you never know which way it's going to go, and you get whipsawed back and forth--but before we get to that, set the table here. Where does this race between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton stand? There's been a lot written this week about her being kind of squeezed out, that she might not be able to win the delegate vote or the popular vote. Does she still have a path to victory here?

Mr. ROGER SIMON (Politico): She is behind. She has a path to victory. She has to win two out of three elements to do it. It will end in a train wreck either way, but it is a survivable train wreck. She is going to go into the convention in Denver behind in pledged delegates, those delegates won in primaries and caucuses. She hopes to get ahead in the popular vote. Technically the popular vote doesn't count, but she will use the popular vote as a club to beat the superdelegates...

REID: Right.

Mr. SIMON: ...the 794 party insiders who hold the balance of power and will determine the nominee.

Why is that a train wreck? Because the superdelegates will have to overturn the will of those voters who have gone into voting booths or into caucuses and voted for Barack Obama. But she would be willing to be named Miss Train Wreck as long as she can be named Madam President. And that is her only route to victory.

REID: This train wreck, is that what you see? Is that her only chance?

Ms. ANA MARIE COX (Time.com): It is her only chance, and I think that the train wreck that she would be in would not actually end on the lawn of the White House. There's some recent surveys showing that as many as 20 percent of Barack Obama supporters are willing to vote for John McCain should he not get the nomination. And this isn't just a question of--they specifically asked, 'If Hillary Clinton is able to get the nomination through superdelegates, would you change your vote?' And people say yes. And that's just now. Imagine what happens when we start to see people really play up that narrative if it starts to get ugly in public?

And I just think, you know, it's funny, I--you know, talking to people on that campaign, they see that--they see this happening. They're not--they're not blind. And I think that there's a sizable faction that would like it to end more gracefully, that--and you don't see that in the Obama...

REID: Yeah.

Ms. COX: ...campaign.

REID: Talked to a lot of people who have already kind of thrown up their hands and said, 'Hey, we don't want to tear the party apart.'

Ms. COX: That's right.

REID: Doyle McManus, Bill Clinton has jumped back into the fray here. On Friday, he was quoted as saying something that the Obama campaign took as an attack on Obama's patriotism. Let's listen to that right now.

President BILL CLINTON: (Friday) And I think it'd be a great thing if we had an election where you had two people who love this country and were devoted to the interests of the county and people could actually ask themselves who's right on these issues instead of all this other stuff that always seems to intrude itself on our politics.

REID: "Two people who love this country," the suggestion being that Barack Obama does not love this country, some people thought. So the Obama campaign, instead of putting him out there on something so sensitive, brought Tony McPeak, four-star general, co-chair of the campaign...

Mr. DOYLE McMANUS (Los Angeles Times): Yeah.

REID: ...out there on the stage next to Obama to respond. Let's see that.

General TONY McPEAK (Obama Campaign Co-Chair): (Yesterday) Both Barack Obama and John McCain are great patriots who love this country and are devoted to it. So is Hillary Clinton. Any suggestion to the contrary is flat wrong.

REID: And in fact off camera he even compared what Clinton did to McCarthyism. Is the Obama campaign overplaying this, or do you think Bill Clinton really was trying to dig at them this way?

Mr. McMANUS: Oh, it was definitely a dig and it is part of what has to be the strategy for Hillary Clinton, and that is to raise questions about Barack Obama's electability. Now, what Bill Clinton tried to do was do it in as subtle a fashion as he could. He didn't say, 'Barack Obama went to sermons by Reverend Wright that were unpatriotic.'

REID: Mm-hmm.

Mr. McMANUS: but he tried to set up the elements to get the voters to remember that. The Clinton campaign really has a problem with Jeremiah Wright. Obama has an obvious problem. The Clinton campaign problem is that it looks as if the damaging video clips of Jeremiah Wright have run out, because all of us have been looking through those DVDs; every television network, every newspaper.

REID: Yeah.

Mr. McMANUS: Every day that goes by that there's not a new scary quote from Jeremiah Wright means that Jeremiah Wright may start to fade. The Clinton campaign has to raise questions about Obama's electability. That's the only way to move those superdelegates, and that's what Bill Clinton was doing.

REID: But Roger Simon, those scary quotes aren't going away in the fall, are they, even if they go away in the Democratic race?

Mr. SIMON: No, and I'm not sure they're going away in the Democratic race. They might drop off the nightly news and from the front pages of newspapers, but Senator Obama's speech, while I thought was an honest speech and that it's the speech he wanted to give rather than his political team wanted him to give, is still problematical for him, and that white, ethnic voters in Pennsylvania may not react to it in the way that it--Obama really went over his base, he went over the American media. They loved that speech.

REID: Right.

Mr. SIMON: But they're not the voters. And he is going to face this below the radar screen trouble that Reverend Wright who, let us admit, made extreme statements. Those are still going to be there. And they're--they are still going to be on the minds of people.

REID: Now, if the Republicans could swiftboat John Kerry on, you know--a guy who many people believed was a war hero, what can they do with what Reverend Wright said in the fall?

Ms. COX: Well, what'll be interesting is how they do that and don't put John McCain's fingerprints on it. Just this week they fired a low-level staffer who had circulated a sort of video mash-up that included a lot of Reverend Wright's sermons. And they sent out a letter not to just their staff but to those--their surrogates and supporters that they didn't want people using Barack Hussein Obama in references. And I also know that John McCain is very serious himself about trying to keep this all very civilized, and I'm sure the Obama team appreciates that. But the RNC probably doesn't see it the same way.

REID: Yeah.

Ms. COX: And it's going to be a lot like with the swiftboating in the sense that it's going to be somewhere from off center stage...

REID: We'll take...

Ms. COX: ...this time around.

REID: Hold that thought. We'll continue our conversation in just a moment.

(Announcements)

REID: We're back again with Ana Marie Cox, Roger Simon and Doyle McManus.

And Doyle, let me ask you about this McCain faux pas in--he was in Jordan, but he was talking about what was going on in Iraq. And he basically suggested that the Iranians were training al-Qaeda and shipping them back into Iraq, which as people who follow this know, they're training Shiite extremists but not al-Qaeda. Do you see this as a big event in this campaign?

Mr. McMANUS: I don't, in this sense: John McCain is very lucky that the voters' minds were not on Iraq and his performance there. John McCain gets his Sunnis and his Shiites mixed up. Look, he's still identified with the Iraq war. But he's got two bigger things to do. The first one he's going to do is explain his position on Iraq in the coming week and what he meant by 100 years. He

didn't mean combat. The funny thing to me is the bigger thing John McCain has to do, I think, is explain that he has a position on the economy. Remember that John McCain said he's not an expert on the economy, he needs to learn more about it. Well, that's what voters' minds are on, and he'd better fix that one pretty soon.

REID: Roger, is this feud that's going on with the Democrats--for a while there it was, hey, the Democrats are getting all the attention, good for them. Now is it helping him because it's getting so nasty and pointing out so many problems with Barack Obama in particular?

Mr. SIMON: Actually, I think the feud is getting nasty, you're absolutely right. But it's also sharpening both candidates. John McCain had a significant victory and he was tenacious and he ran a good campaign, but let's face the facts that he won in a weak field. His two major opponents was Mike Huckabee and Mitt Romney. Those are not, you know, huge names in the Republican Party. And I think he knows he has to take his campaign up a notch and he's not being tested on it.

Where the Democrats are going to come after John McCain is on the simple issue of 'do you want a third term for George Bush?' And every time John McCain talks about continuing the Iraq war, that persuades voters to think, 'yeah, this is George Bush for the third term.' Americans don't usually like to have one party in power for three terms in a row.

REID: Ana, a quick change of topic here. Bill Richardson endorsed Barack Obama, and the Clinton campaign so mad James Carville not only called him a traitor, but compared him to Judas. Happy Easter.

Ms. COX: Yes, happy Easter. Happy Easter, Mr. Richardson. I think that, you know, what would that make Hillary, we have to ask, in that analogy. She does need to come--make a huge comeback, also. But I think that it's probably not quite the news story that the Obama camp would like it to be. What it is, it is a sign of people starting to line up with who they think is going to win. I mean, Richardson is a kind of politician that he just wants to be there when the--when someone gets a crown. I think the likelihood of a Obama/Richardson ticket is pretty slim. I think--I would hope that even Richardson recognizes that.

REID: Yeah, don't tell him that. OK, great. Thank you.

We'll be back in a moment.

(Announcements)

REID: That's our broadcast. Bob Schieffer will be back next Sunday. Thanks for watching FACE THE NATION.

