

© 2009, CBS Broadcasting Inc. All Rights Reserved.
PLEASE CREDIT ANY QUOTES OR EXCERPTS FROM THIS CBS
TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "CBS NEWS' FACE THE NATION."



**November 29, 2009
Transcript**

GUESTS: SENATOR CARL LEVIN
D-Michigan

DICK ARMEY
Former House Republican Leader

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA
Former Republican Congressional Candidate

ED GILLESPIE
Republican Strategist

GUEST MODERATOR:
Mr. HARRY SMITH
CBS News

This is a rush transcript provided
for the information and convenience of
the press. Accuracy is not guaranteed.
In case of doubt, please check with
FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
(202) 457-4481

TRANSCRIPT

HARRY SMITH: Today on FACE THE NATION, more troops for Afghanistan, but at what price victory?

President Obama is expected to announce an increase of troops for the war in Afghanistan Tuesday. But who will foot the bill of a million dollars per soldier per year? And just how does President Obama finish the job there? We'll ask Senator Carl Levin, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Then we'll turn to divisions within the Republican Party--is there room for moderates. We'll talk with former Republican candidate Dede Scozzafava, former House Majority Leader Dick Armey, and former Republican chairman Ed Gillespie.

But first, is the war in Afghanistan winnable on FACE THE NATION.

ANNOUNCER: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now from Washington, substituting for Bob Schieffer, anchor of the EARLY SHOW, Harry Smith.

HARRY SMITH: Good morning and joining us now is Senator Carl Levin, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. Good morning, Sir.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN (D-Michigan/Chairman, Armed Services Committee): Good morning, Harry.

HARRY SMITH: This new report from your committee that basically confirms Osama bin Laden was within the grasp of U.S. military at Tora Bora in December of the year of 9/11. Had he been killed or captured at that time, do you think we would still have U.S. forces in Afghanistan?

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: Maybe not. I would say there'd be a good chance we would not have forces or need to have forces there. But this has been kind of well known for some time that we took our eye off the ball. Instead of moving in on him at Tora Bora the previous administration decided to move its forces to Iraq. It was a mistake then and I think this report of the Foreign Relations Committee just sort of reinforces that.

HARRY SMITH: All right. President Obama is going to call for thirty or thirty-five thousand more troops on Tuesday night at West Point to go to Afghanistan. Will he have Democratic support for this move?

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: I think a lot depends on two things. One is the mission for those troops. If-- if the mission is, as I hope, trying to very quickly build up the Afghan army, both in size and in capability and in equipment. If the mission is to give them the capacity to take on the Taliban, and I believe that will be the principal mission stated, that would be one important thing to happen for Democratic support.

But the second thing which I think there's greater question on is why the additional troops would help increase the size of the Afghan army? When I was in Afghanistan I was told that the greatest need in Afghanistan is for more Afghan troops.

HARRY SMITH: Right.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: General Conway, the commandant of the Marine Corps, has said if there's one thing he could get in Afghanistan it would be more Afghan troops. Marine captain says that the Achilles heel in Afghanistan is the shortage of Afghan troops.

HARRY SMITH: And aren't these Afghan troops, per se, traditionally, very difficult to train and difficult to bring up to speed? It's very different from the surge in Iraq where the-- a population was more educated. There's widespread illiteracy there. Is this a doable mission, if it is, to be to-- to spread the mission to the Afghan-- Afghans?

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: It's very doable. The Afghans are known to be fighters.

HARRY SMITH: Yeah.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: And there's not that kind of ethnic division that existed in Iraq. But what is so critically the-- the question, it seems to me, is not whether we should send more mentors and trainers. We should. The issue is how would additional combat forces, additional Marines, for instance, in Helmand province--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Mm-Hm.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: --increase the speed of the buildup of the Afghan army? And that's what I think the President is going to need to explain, because the key to success in Afghanistan is the Afghan army taking on the Taliban.

HARRY SMITH: It sounds to me just from the surface or your explanation that at least initially you're not inclined to go along.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: I have favored additional trainers. I have favored a-- a real surge in equipment. But the key here is an Afghan surge, not an American surge. And if the President lays out the case--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Mm-Hm.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: --for why our combat forces that are going particularly to the South would increase the speedup of the Afghan army, it seems to me that that would be very, very important. But we already have more troops in Afghanistan than there are Afghan troops being partnered--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Mm-Hm.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: --in Afghanistan. In other words, the shortage in Afghanistan now in terms of partnering which is the key element here--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Right.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: --with the Afghan forces is not a shortage of American troops, it's a shortage of Afghan troops. The ratio in Helmand province, where we were, were five Americans for each Afghan soldier. It should be reversed.

HARRY SMITH: And speaking of partners the Obama administration has tried to put the hammer down on the Karzai government. Do you think the Karzai government, a not good partner right now, will-- is getting the message?

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: I think that the President has done an important job of looking at the relationship between the confidence that the Afghan people have in the Karzai government and success of the Afghan people over the Taliban. He's made that a-- a important point in meetings with Karzai. Secretary of state has done that. And so I think that a comprehensive look at Afghanistan, which the President is going to obviously make Tuesday night, will include pressure on the Karzai government to end the corruption that's there.

HARRY SMITH: Part of the other-- part of this equation is the declining support from the American people for this effort. The fact is-- is the al Qaeda is very much not in Afghanistan anymore. If it's any place in the neighborhood it's in Pakistan. They're all over different parts of Africa. There're plenty of places they can go and find safe haven. All of this blood, all of this treasure, more U.S. troops lost this year in Afghanistan than at any point since 2001, is it worth the price?

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: It's worth it providing our mission is to get the Afghan army and the Afghan people in charge of their own future. We cannot by ourselves win a war. We can help the Afghan army and the Afghan police to prevail. But that's the key--is whether our mission--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Mm-Hm.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: --is to go in there and take on the Taliban ourselves? And then as the Marine commandant put it in this morning's paper--we end up being on the street corner of these villages--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Right.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: --which is not effective. What is effective--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Mm-Hm.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: --is if an Afghan soldier is on the street corner--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Right.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: --of these villages.

HARRY SMITH: General McChrystal actually asked for about forty thousand troops. The sense is that President Obama will try to get the other five or ten thousand from NATO. Do you think he'll be successful?

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: He sure is working hard at it. It's-- one of the keys here is not just to Afghan-ize this war but also to NATO-ize this war. I know he's made a major effort with NATO countries to get some additional troops and I think he'll have at least some success and that's critically important.

HARRY SMITH: As we said at the top of the show, the estimated cost to keep a soldier in Afghanistan right now is one million dollars a year. How should this be paid for?

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: Well in the middle of a recession we're probably not going to be able to increase taxes to pay for it. There should have been, as far as I'm concerned, tax increases long ago on upper bracket folks who did so well during the Bush years. That's where the tax increases should have taken place, but that should have happened some time ago. But in the middle of this recession, I don't think you're going to be able successfully or fairly to add a tax burden to middle-income people.

HARRY SMITH: David Obey is talking about a war tax, taxing the rich for this. You think it's a no go?

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: I think you could tax the upper brackets--two-fifty-- two hundred fifty thousand for instance or more. But I don't think middle-income America is in a position now where they can pay additional taxes because the economic stress is so great here.

HARRY SMITH: And the upper income level is expected to pay a significant cost if, in fact, the health care reform is passed. Do you think there are sixty votes in the Senate in the days and weeks to come to pass health care reform?

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: I think there's a-- a decent chance that we'll be able to get sixty votes. The leader here Harry Reid has done a really good job of getting sixty votes to jump that first hurdle, which was a procedural hurdle. But I won't underestimate his capability to get us to sixty votes on final passage.

HARRY SMITH: With a public option?

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: With a probably a public option that the states can opt out from.

HARRY SMITH: Mm-Hm. And as long as we're talking about money issues, there is increasing talk now about especially with unemployment over ten percent, an economy that seems slow to be creating new jobs even though technically the recession maybe over. Should there be a second stimulus package?

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: If it would work, yes. But I don't think there's a lot of evidence that it would succeed. We have some TARP money that's still available in the tens of billions of dollars which many of us think ought to be put to appropriate stimulus. That is where the stimulus should come. A lot of borrow-- a lot of lending by banks has not occurred, particularly small businesses. TARP money should be used to insist that the banks that-- particularly that have already received TARP funds use that money to lend to businesses that are good risks. And there's been some real failure, I believe, on the part of the Treasury to insist upon that and on the banks to carry out that purpose.

HARRY SMITH: I just want to wrap up and just get one thing clear because of-- of this big speech on Tuesday night. Should the President tell the American people how this surge should be paid for? Should he outline Tuesday night?

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: I think he ought to address that issue. But mainly the mission is critically important and the relationship between the mission, which is to add Afghan troops. The relationship between that and adding American combat forces, if they're not going to be partnered with Afghan troops in the field. But the answer to your question is yes, he should address that in a very forthright way.

HARRY SMITH: And for him to be able to say mission accomplished in Afghanistan, what will it mean?

SENATOR CARL LEVIN: It will mean, I think, greater security for the United States, but it's the Afghans that have got to succeed and we've got to help them succeed.

HARRY SMITH: Senator Levin, we thank you so much for your time--

SENATOR CARL LEVIN (overlapping): Sure.

HARRY SMITH: --this morning. Do appreciate it, Sir.

SENATOR CARL LEVIN (overlapping): Thank you, Harry.

HARRY SMITH: We'll be back in one minute.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

HARRY SMITH: Joining us now to talk about the Republican Party former Majority Leader Dick Arme; Dede Scozzafava, who is a moderate Republican and Former Congressional Candidate; and Ed Gillespie, former Chairman of the Republican National Committee. Good morning to you all.

ED GILLESPIE (Republican Strategist/Resurgent Republic): Good morning.

DICK ARMEY (Former Majority Leader): Good morning.

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA (R-New York Assembly): Good morning.

HARRY SMITH: The headlines out of the GOP this week, this notion, the Republican National Committee considering a list of ten principles. Some have called them "The GOP Ten Commandments," which include things like support for the surge in Afghanistan or opposition for instance to the Obama health plan. As a candidate if you agree with the eight out of ten-- with eight out of ten, you'll get support from the national GOP-- GOP. And, if you don't, you're out of luck. Dick Arme, is this litmus test a good idea?

DICK ARMEY: First of all, it's not a litmus test. Secondly, it is being offered for consideration in the party.

HARRY SMITH: Right.

DICK ARMEY: And, I think, thirdly, it is seven out of the ten. But if you're-- if you'll read the list, at least five of the ten are right-- right at the center stage, center post of the big ten of American politics today--fiscal conservatism.

HARRY SMITH: Mm-Hm.

DICK ARMEY: And I think if-- if the Republican Party is going to win any future elections it has to be presented as an alternative to the Democrat Party's-- a-- a-- a-- fiscal a-- a-- a--spending. And-- and-- and in fact it's a very reasonable thing to say if you want the support of the

Republican Party demonstrate some allegiance to the primary positions taken by the party. That's not a litmus test. That's just a-- if you want us to give you our money, our support, ours-- our troops in the field--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Mm-Hm.

DICK ARMEY: --our endorsement, then demonstrate that you're someone like us.

HARRY SMITH: Ed Gillespie, some have called this pact or the idea of this pact as the-- apparently the GOP will have a convers-- serious conversation about this over the next couple of months to decide whether or not to adopt it. Some have called it a suicide pact. Is it a good idea?

ED GILLESPIE: Well, look, Harry, I think a-- a good vigorous debate inside the party about our principles and our policies is a healthy thing for an out of power party trying to make its way back. I suspect if you look at those ten things that a Republican running in a primary for Congress against another Republican, the Republican who agrees with nine out of, you know, those ten will beat the Republican who agrees with seven out of those ten.

HARRY SMITH: Mm-Hm.

ED GILLESPIE: The question for me is-- is it-- you know, in terms of the-- as a former chairman as I look at it, what if you have a-- a Republican who agrees with seven out of those ten things running against a Democrat who agrees with zero out of those ten things? And you want to put some money into the race to try to win back the House and you're constrained from doing that. I'm not sure that would be in the best interest of the party at the end of the day.

So, I-- I think, a vigorous debate over these things is healthy, but I also think as a party, we need to be careful to make sure that we don't constrain our ability to win back the majority. When I was working for Dick ArmeY, when he was the Majority Leader, we had a lot of Republicans in New York, New Jersey, I think of folks like Sherry Boehlert or Chris Shays in Connecticut who didn't agree necessarily with everything, but we were debating tax cuts and balance budgets and welfare reform. And today you look at the Democratic majority. They're raising taxes. They have the government takeover of health care.

So, I think getting back to majority is important and we ought not constrain our ability to do that.

HARRY SMITH: Because in the end, this is what this is really all about. Let me ask Dede a question. Have you had a chance to see this list?

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA: I have.

HARRY SMITH: Yeah. And, would you have been able to at least get agree on seven or eight out of ten?

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA: I would've been at seven out of ten on the list. I had the opportunity to review the list this-- this past week. And I would've been at seven out of ten. If people looked at my record and-- and understood how I felt about a lot of the federal issues, I think they could see that I was for lower taxes, lower government spending. I was-- I was not in favor of repeal of the 2003 tax cuts. I am not in favor of an estate tax.

HARRY SMITH: Mm-Hm.

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA: There were many things in that platform that I would be okay with. And, if you look at the Syracuse Post Standard and the Editorial Review Board that I went through in Syracuse, and you read the editorial conclusion, you could see they arrived at the-- at the conclusion that I was a fiscal conservative. And, that's after a two-hour editorial board.

HARRY SMITH: Right. At the same time--

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA (overlapping): Cap-and-trade. Cap-and-trade.

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Right. At--

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA: Go ahead.

HARRY SMITH: Which is also on that list--to oppose cap-and-trade.

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA (overlapping): Right. Which I would've been a no on cap-and-trade. I would've been a no on the health care bill as it's currently presented.

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Yet as a conservative-- a conservative insurgent in your district you ended up ceding the nomination to him. Is this kind of a list--a-- a-- a do or die list, in the end counterproductive because in your district--in the twenty-third district, which I'm familiar with, if somebody would've suggested a year ago a Democrat would've been elected there, they would've been laughed at. There's a Democrat who is going to Congress now.

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA (overlapping): Well, I think-- I think you've got to look at the predecessor. John McHugh served this district very well. He was a moderate. Some of the positions that I got criticized for taking were positions that John already had. I think it's important that sometimes there are regional differences even as-- as Mister Arme represented Texas. There are certain things--

HARRY SMITH: Mm-Hm.

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA: --that he voted against that are right on the-- the-- the-- the litmus test, the ten steps. So I think there's got to be some understanding. The most important thing we can do as Republicans, I think, and the leadership can do as Republicans, are-- are driving a message that brings us together. And, I absolutely agree with Mister Gillespie--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Right.

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA: --when we talk about things like fiscal conservatism, lower taxes--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Okay.

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA: --and less government spending, the pocket book issues are the things that are most important to people today.

HARRY SMITH: Mister Arme, did this-- did the-- did it work, this-- the-- the push by conservatives to try to seize control by the people, to seize control, which is a sort of one of the ideas of-- of the Tea Party Movement. Did it-- did it work in-- in the 23rd District?

DICK ARMEY: No. Actually what happened in 23rd District was the Republicans lost that race when they nominated Dede. And-- and my activists on the grounds contacted me and said that. The Conservative Party stayed out of the race until they saw that despite the fact that she had the full and enthusiastic and generous support of the Republican Party she was losing the race. She was already clearly falling, dropping like a brick, before the conservative candidate got in the race. So the fact of the matter was even the Democrat was running against her as a big spender. She was a bad fit for that race. Had there been a-- a-- an electoral primary process--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Mm-Hm.

DICK ARMEY: --she wouldn't have won the primary, she wouldn't have been the candidate, and the Republican would win the race. That's what I predict will happen in the fall. The-- probably the most heartbreaking thing of that event was as she found herself falling so far, so fast, despite all the support she had, when she dropped out, she endorsed the Democrat. That makes it very difficult for her to come back--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Mm-Hm.

DICK ARMEY: --in-- in this-- in this primary that will be opening up for next year and saying "I want to run as a Republican." I think she burned a bridge there that will probably not be one--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Right.

DICK ARMEY: --that can be rebuilt even with massive federal funds.

HARRY SMITH: Let me ask Ed Gillespie this question. Is moderate a dirty word now in the Republican Party?

ED GILLESPIE: No, I don't believe it is. The fact is that, as Leader Armeay knows, you know, the 26th District of Texas what it takes to get elected as a Republican where he was from is--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Mm-Hm.

ED GILLESPIE: --different than what it might take in New England to get elected or in California. And, as Ronald Reagan said, "Someone who agrees with me eighty percent of the time is my-- is my friend." I think the important thing is we have seen the Democrats elect, you know, moderates who don't agree with every platform, every plank in their party's platform. And in the process the Democratic Party hasn't moved to the right.

HARRY SMITH: Right.

ED GILLESPIE: If anything, it's moved to the left, Harry, the-- if you look at the-- the agenda they're trying to pass. So, I think, that we can be a party that gets the majority--two hundred and eighteen seats in the House. That has some folks in New England, California, other places who may not agree with Leader Armeay or me on-- on everything.

HARRY SMITH: Mm-Hm.

ED GILLESPIE: But we have an agenda where we're cutting taxes, not raising them. We're-- we're giving people power, not taking it away.

HARRY SMITH: But let's talk about-- Lindsey Graham is a frequent guest on this program. His-- his ratings from the Conservative Union are ninety percent. He's under fire--there's a big piece in the New York Times today--in South Carolina because he is not conservative enough. Can someone with that kind of credentials be not conservative enough?

ED GILLESPIE: Well, Lindsey Graham, as you know, has been elected statewide in-- in South Carolina twice now, I'm pretty sure. I think he's, you know, in his second term in the United States Senate--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Mm-Hm.

ED GILLESPIE: --very popular. Look, we have a lot of internal discussion in the party right now and that's a healthy thing. The fact is because there's an op-- there's a sense of opportunity in the Republican Party that we can win House--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Right.

ED GILLESPIE: --seats and Senate seats we have vigorous primaries going on. That is the right problem to have. It's also not constrained by the way to the Republican Party. If you look at the Democrats you have moveon.org--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Mm-Hm.

ED GILLESPIE: --and some left wing groups now attacking Democrats who voted against a government-run health care system. So that vigorous debate goes inside-- goes on inside of both parties.

HARRY SMITH: Right.

ED GILLESPIE: But I think that if-- if we're doing it in a way where it's healthy and respectful. And there's an open process. We're best as a bottom-up party.

HARRY SMITH: Right.

ED GILLESPIE: I think what Dick Arney was saying about New York 23--we had eleven people choose a nominee--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Mm-Hm.

ED GILLESPIE: --as opposed to an open transparent primary that's better us.

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): --county chairman.

Dick Arney, some people suggest that the Republicans are fighting a demographic battle that they can't win. That-- that this is going to end up being exclusionary and you'll end up in a position of not being able to take back the seats you want to take back in this next year.

DICK ARMEY: I don't think that's true at all. In fact, the-- the party that responds to the energy that is found in the public, and right now that energy is found in the small government

conservative movement that is looking at some sense of fiscal responsibility. That party that captures their attention will be the party that will win massive terms.

I think the Republican Party is in a great position. Look at the more moderate Republican that won the governorship in-- in New Jersey on a margin of votes provided by the small government conservatives who abandoned their candidate for him because he had a chance to win. Watch Governor Castle as he runs for the Senate. There is plenty of room for the more moderate people--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Mm-Hm.

DICK ARMEY: --to win elections if they fit their district. But if, in fact, you-- you-- you nominate a person who can't win in their district, then you should expect that--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): All right.

DICK ARMEY: --person will lose the election.

HARRY SMITH: Dede, let me ask you this question. Do you think you were too moderate?

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA: Sure. No, I-- I don't. And-- and to Mister Arme's point, I was up by seven percentage points mid-October. And there was a lot of Washington all of a sudden and-- and the club for growth. And-- and-- and the right side of the party that-- that all of a sudden flooded the market, distorted my record. And it was very difficult to counter that. I think it was very difficult for leadership at the RNC not to cave in to the pressures that they were receiving from the right.

Listen, at the end of the day, I-- I know my record. I know my district. I've worked closely with John McHugh. And it's an-- it's unfortunate what happened. And at the end of the day I think I made the decision that was best for the assembly district that I represent--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): Mm-Hm.

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA: --the constituents that I represent here--

HARRY SMITH (overlapping): All right.

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA: --and the importance of Fort Drum to this area. I hope in the end, I hope what we can have is an inclusive Republican Party that's focused on fiscal principles. And-- and I'm-- I'm hopeful that we can do that.

HARRY SMITH: Perhaps that is one thing you all can agree on. Ed Gillespie, I want to wrap up with you. Will the Republicans get a-- a majority control in the House of Representatives in this next election? I have twenty seconds.

ED GILLESPIE: Harry, three months ago I would have said not likely. Three months from now I think I'm going to say very likely.

HARRY SMITH: All right. Ed, thank you so much. Dede Scozza-- Scozzafava, thank you very much for your time this morning.

DEDE SCOZZAFAVA: Thank you.

HARRY SMITH: Dick Armev, appreciate your input as well. Thank you all. We'll be back in a moment.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

HARRY SMITH: Thanks for watching our broadcast today. Bob Schieffer will be back next week. I'm Harry Smith. I'll see you tomorrow on THE EARLY SHOW.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

ANNOUNCER: This broadcast was produced by CBS News, which is solely responsible for the selection of today's guests and topics. It originated in Washington, DC.