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FACE THE NATION

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GUESTS: Senator BARACK OBAMA (D-IL)

**Governor MIKE HUCKABEE (R-AR)
Chairman, National Governors
Association**

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***FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
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BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, presidential politics, fallout from the ports deal, and worsening bloodshed in Iraq as the war nears its third anniversary.

At a big party gathering in Memphis, Republicans get a head start on 2008. Is the president an asset or a liability?

Plus, Dubai helps the administration by scrapping the ports deal, but Congress has tasted blood. Is their political push-back a sign of things to come?

And how will Democrats capitalize on White House woes? These are the questions for Senator Barack Obama, Democrat of Illinois, and Governor Mike Huckabee, Republican of Arkansas.

I'll have a final word on Iraq, three years and counting. But first, what would Democrats do differently there and how do Republicans outside Washington really feel about the president?

Announcer: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

SCHIEFFER: And joining us now, Senator Barack Obama is in the studio with us.

Senator, thank you for coming. And I must say before we get serious, you were the absolute star of last night's Gridiron show in Washington, which is put on by local journalists. It's all parody where people from both parties come together. And I must say, when you said that you were a little nervous at the beginning of your speech because you realized people were drinking alcoholic beverages and the vice president was just 30 yards away, it really brought down the house. What would the Gridiron have done this year without--without Vice President Cheney? He became the target of targets.

Senator BARACK OBAMA (Democrat, Illinois): You know, it was like shooting quail in a barrel. I--it was--so we appreciate it. You know, he was a great sport about it. The president was a great sport about it. And the truth is, though, in my family, my wife is the funny one. So I'm glad she didn't get up on there because she could've done a rip on me that would've lasted 20 minutes.

SCHIEFFER: Well, I'll tell you, if she's funnier than you are, then she's my candidate to host the Academy Awards next year because you were my candidate until you said that.

We need to get serious, Senator. We're coming upon the third anniversary of the War in Iraq. What do we do now?

Sen. OBAMA: Well, at this point I think it's clear that there's not going to be a military solution to this. I think there's going to have to be a political solution determined by the Iraqis. And obviously, all of us have been watching with growing concern when we see the Shias, the Sunnis at each

other. The bombing of the mosque, I think, brought us close to civil war. Now it's Iraqi leadership that is going to have to come to the fore and say, 'We want a nation that is unified and are willing to make sacrifices.' Each faction saying, 'We are willing to give something up to accomplish that vision.'

If they are not willing to do that--and I think we'll know in the next several months. If you don't see concessions from the Shias on the Constitution, if you don't see in the interior ministry and the security apparatus of the country, Sunnis as well as Shias, who are in power, and that there's a non-sectarian perspective in how the central government should be run, then it's hard for me to imagine how we can be successful. And I think that at that point we're going to have to make some serious determinations about how we deploy our troops.

SCHIEFFER: Well, what do we do? Let's suppose that a civil war does break out. What should American troops do?

Sen. OBAMA: Well, you know, I...

SCHIEFFER: Who's side are they on?

Sen. OBAMA: You know, I'm not a military expert. What I know is, is that this year should be the year in which we start withdrawing our troops. I think the footprint that we have on the ground is actually exacerbating some of the tensions.

My view--and I always thought that this enterprise was poorly thought out, but I also felt that once we were there, we should try to make the best of a bad situation. But if, in fact, the Iraqi leadership is not interested, we can't function, essentially, as a replacement for Saddam's Revolutionary Guard and try to hold the country together by sheer force. What we can do is advise, help build up the Iraqi security forces. But if politics break down and you start seeing all-out civil war, it is not appropriate for our troops to be in the middle of that, and I think I would then be asking the joint chiefs of staff and others to figure out how do we deploy ourselves where we can be helpful in minimizing death and destruction?

SCHIEFFER: Well, what you're talking about is pulling out.

Sen. OBAMA: Well, you know, there are certain sections of the country, even if there was a civil war, that I think remain safe and stable. Certainly that's true in the Kurdish north. There are certain portions both in Western Iraq and Southern Iraq where conceivably some of our troops could be deployed. But certainly what would not be appropriate would be for American troops to be placed in the midst of a civil war, having to choose sides, not knowing who our allies were and who our enemies were. That would be a recipe for disaster.

SCHIEFFER: So, you're not--you're not with Congressman John Murtha who says it's time to leave, that we've done all we can do. If in fact the United

States did pull the troops out, do you think that would be seen as a sign of weakness by the insurgents and that they would strike America someplace else?

Sen. OBAMA: You know, the challenge right now is not simply the insurgency. The challenge is the Shias and the Sunnis maintaining their own militias, engaging in a low-level civil war as it is, that is the real problem. And so what we have to recognize is that if you don't see significant political accommodations between these various parties, then our role necessarily is limited. It's not going to matter how many troops we have there, if the Iraqi people have not taken responsibility for forming a government that recognizes the importance of all parties being involved and, most importantly, makes certain that the government apparatus, the security apparatus, is in the hands of non-sectarians, then we are not going to be able to impose order in that--in that country.

SCHIEFFER: Senator, let's talk a little bit about politics. The White House is--I think even their strongest supporters would say they've had a very hard time lately, kind of culminating in this port deal...

Sen. OBAMA: Right.

SCHIEFFER: ...that went haywire. Yet Democrats do not seem to be getting their act together at all. What do Democrats need to do here. Because I'm not sure I understand what the Democrats' message is right now? Do you have one?

Sen. OBAMA: Well, look, the--it's always more difficult when you don't control any branch of government, and we don't have one central figure who is delivering the message in a consistent way and a disciplined way. But the Democrats, I think, stand for some--some things that the American people stand for, and it's a matter of us projecting it going into the '06 election. I think we all believe that we should achieve energy independence; that the notion that we're sending billions of dollars to countries like Iran that are hostile towards us makes no sense. And so being serious about an energy policy that switches to alternative fuels and biodiesel is something that the American people, I think, can get behind.

The health care crisis. Since I've been in Washington, we have not had a single serious debate on the floor of the Senate about what to do for not just the uninsured, but people who have insurance and seeing their co-payments and deductibles going up, for businesses that are straining under the costs and can't compete internationally. So having a serious message that said, you know, 'By '08, we're going to have every child in America insured and by 2012, we've got every American who's working able to have accessible health insurance,' that would be an agenda that makes sense.

Education. Being serious about ensuring that our young people are competitive around issues of math and science.

And on security, being serious about the ports, chemical plants, rails, that the 9/11 commission says we have not adequately protected since 9/11, and has

to be part of our national security apparatus. Those are all issues where, I think, if the Democrats are clear, focused and, frankly, are willing to repeat themselves--sometimes we have more problems than the Republicans just keeping our talking points simple so that the American people can--can understand them, then I think we can be successful.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you this. Are you going to have to campaign on these social issues like abortion rights, on gay marriage, these hot-button issues...

Sen. OBAMA: Right.

SCHIEFFER: ...that seem to be so much in favor of many people and other--by the same token, so many people are opposed to them? Where do you come down on all that? What--do you emphasize those, or you--do you not?

Sen. OBAMA: Well, I--look, I think those are difficult issues, and I think that people feel passionately about them. I don't think you can avoid them completely. And let me take the example of abortion; I think the Democrats historically have made a mistake just trying to avoid the issue, or pretend that there's not a moral component to it. There is. And I think that no matter what side of the debate that you're on, you're going to agree that the--the decision to terminate a pregnancy is a profound decision for the woman and for society, and that we have to have a serious conversation about how to reduce the circumstances in which women feel obliged to make that choice. But I think the...

SCHIEFFER: You are pro choice.

Sen. OBAMA: I am pro choice. But I also think that it's important, even as I indicate that I'm pro choice, to say this is not a trivial issue, and we have to listen to the profound concerns that other people have. More broadly, you know, the red-state phenomenon where Democrats just say, "Well, we can't campaign in those areas because they're going to vote Republican," I think is a mistake. You know, I'm a Christian, for example, I want to go into churches and have a debate about moral values. Of course, my moral values don't just include issues of abortion or gay marriage. I'm interested in our obligations to the poor, I'm interested in Sermon on the Mount. And I think it's important for us to willingly engage in a values discussion in America because, ultimately, that's where a lot of people live. They're trying to have meaning in their lives in a complicated, dynamic, topsy-turvy society. And the fact that we have not engaged in that I think has given the Republicans an advantage.

SCHIEFFER: Hillary Clinton is leading most of the polls as the Democratic favorite right now. Do you think she's the best candidate that the Democrats can put forward?

Sen. OBAMA: Well, the--I've got, I think, half of my colleagues are running for president, so I'm not going to take the bait on that one, Bob. But I...

SCHIEFFER: Why?

Sen. OBAMA: I think Hillary is a wonderfully intelligent and capable person. I'm sure that should she decide to run for president, she will be a formidable candidate. I think there are a lot of other candidates who are running, who bring terrific qualities to the table. I think right now, my focus is on '06, because it's critical, I think, for all Americans to say that we need some balance in our government. If we don't have any capacity to investigate the administration when it makes bad decisions around the port deals, or wire tapping, or a whole host of other issues, if we don't have some check on the unfettered power of the White House, then I think that we're going to continue to see some of the problems that we've had over the last several months.

SCHIEFFER: One final, and one quick question. It seems now that ethics reform, which was on the front burner of everybody for a while, looks like it's just almost about to slide right off the table. What happened?

Sen. OBAMA: Well, I'm not going to let it slide off the table. I mean, we've got a bill on the Senate floor that makes some small incremental steps, and it's my effort along with others on the Democratic side as well as some Republicans to try to strengthen it. We're going to try to see if we can ban some of the corporate jets that are being used, and perks. We're going to see if we can put a strong enforcement agency in place that can take complaints outside of the Senate. So we're going to work hard, and I think that ultimately we're going to see a product come out of the Senate that is a decent product. That's my hope, and I'm going to be pushing my colleagues. I'm a little concerned about what happens on the House side. There seems to be a lot of back-pedaling. Given that most of the scandals came out of the House side I would think that they would be more interested in moving on this than they have been so far.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Senator, thank you very much and good luck. I hope to have you again many times on FACE THE NATION.

Sen. OBAMA: Thank you, Bob.

SCHIEFFER: Thank you.

We'll be back in a moment with Republican Governor Mike Huckabee.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And with us now from Little Rock, Arkansas, Arkansas governor, Mike Huckabee. He is also chairman of the National Governor's Association. He, earlier this weekend he was in Memphis, where all the people who are thinking about running for the Republican nomination--the wannabes, the praying-to-be--all of them were all gathered in one place to sort of kick off the 2008 run for the presidency.

So, Governor, I guess the first thing I should ask you is, are you going to seek the Republican nomination?

Governor MIKE HUCKABEE (Republican, Arkansas; Chairman, National Governors Association): Well, as I told the folks in Memphis, it would be little disingenuous to say, 'Oh, I've never even thought about it.' Anybody with enough ego and ambition to run for public office probably gives some consideration. I'm kicking the tires, but not deciding until probably early next year. The interesting thing in Memphis was all of us going around trying to act as if we were really weren't thinking at all about 2008. It was only about 2006. And the reality is, there are a lot of folks working at it, because it's going to be a wide-open shot. But at the same token, the--the focus immediately is for this year's election.

SCHIEFFER: Governor, I want to say one thing, that, ideology and party aside, you are a politician that leads by example. And by that I mean that some years back you discovered you had type 2 diabetes--I happen to have the same disease myself--and you decided to do something about it. You know that obesity has become an epidemic of national proportions. It is a real health hazard. And you lost how much weight?

Gov. HUCKABEE: About 110 pounds all together, Bob, over the course of a little more than a year.

SCHIEFFER: How did you do it?

Gov. HUCKABEE: Well, really the old-fashioned way. I realized, with the help of my doctor, and I did it with the sense of cutting the calories and increasing the exercise level--something I'd never done before. And I didn't focus on losing weight. I think that's a huge mistake Americans make. The focus needs to be on healthy activities, healthy behavior, healthy eating habits. And when we focus on health rather than weight, the weight will take care of itself, and with it the diabetes disappeared for me, and there's been no medication now in three years. Just completed my third marathon a week ago, and I've never felt better, and I'm doing things at age 50 that I couldn't do when I was 17.

SCHIEFFER: Well, and I know that you're also working with the man who was sort of a junk food addict, by his own admission, who happens to come from your own home town, Hope, Arkansas, former President Clinton. And the two of you are working on this campaign on obesity.

Gov. HUCKABEE: We are. The issue of obesity and the health issues that it causes really is not a partisan issue. And President Clinton asked me to join with him in an effort with the Heart Association to combat childhood obesity because it is a serious issue that is not only going to have a dramatic health impact on kids, but more importantly, Bob, this is going to bankrupt America economically if we don't begin to make some serious cultural changes.

SCHIEFFER: Let's talk a little bit about the war in Iraq. We're--this week will begin the third year since the invasion, the anniversary comes this week. There's no question the president has taken a heavy hit on this. People on all sides of this issue have come to the point where they don't really seem to

know what to do about it now. What do you think we ought to do about Iraq, governor?

Gov. HUCKABEE: Well, I just got back from there a little over a month ago, and I went with an open mind. I have to tell you that when I talked to the soldiers who are actually over there, sucking the sand in their lungs, putting their boots on the ground and facing the bullets and the bombs, I got a very different perspective than I did from back here. And that perspective is if these guys are losing, somebody hasn't told them, because they honestly think they're making the difference. They really believe that they're not simply doing something for the Iraqis, but doing something with the Iraqis who are making an increasing effort to take control of their own security.

It is a messy process. It's not going perfectly. War never does. A lot of Americans--I know, I'm impatient with it. I want it to be over. I want everybody to come home. But we've been a democracy for 260 years in this country. We're still working to get it right. And I think that sometimes we need to realize that the establishment of a beachhead, of stability and democracy in that part of the world has long-term ramifications not just for their security, but for ours. But if we fail, if we leave too early because we just don't have the will to stay and get the job done right, it also will have long-term ramifications that we'll pay for in our loss of credibility as well as our loss of security.

SCHIEFFER: Well, now, you just heard Senator Obama say earlier in this broadcast that he basically thinks it's beyond a military solution. He says it's all about the politics of these separate sects coming together. And he's not sure there is a military answer anymore.

Gov. HUCKABEE: Well, the military answer has never been the sole answer. There always has to be a sense of political craftsmanship to form a government that can work. And there's going to be some messy start-ups, particularly with the Shias and the Sunnis trying to decide will they be--I think as Senator Lugar so brilliantly put it last week, will they be Sunnis, Shias, or will they be Iraqis? But you know, in America, we still sometimes have to decide, are we going to be Democrats, Republicans, or are we going to be Americans. So, even though we don't--maybe not--we're not shooting at each other, 100-something years ago we were shooting at each other. So there is a process that we have to respect takes time, and these are not people who have a wonderful history of having self-governing rule. But they're working at it, and I think they're doing a lot better at getting there than sometimes they're given credit.

SCHIEFFER: Governor, do you think that President Bush--and there's no question that he's having a pretty rough time now--do you think he's an asset or a liability for your party?

Gov. HUCKABEE: In the long term he's still an asset. I know a lot of people are down on the president, and I see the poll numbers. So I'm enough of a politician to read that. But I'm also one who realizes that as a governor, every day I have to make tough decisions, as my colleagues in the governor

ranks do. Often those decisions we make knowing they're not going to be popular, and knowing full well they're going to cause a dip in our poll numbers. But we didn't get elected to be popular. We got elected to make tough decisions and make things work at the end of the day.

I believe that this is a president who, whether people love him or hate him, agree with him or disagree with him, he truly goes to work every day with a sense of, 'What do I need to do not just for my immediately poll numbers, but what do I need to do for the long-term security of America?' And I respect that in him a great deal.

SCHIEFFER: So, if you were a Republican in Arkansas running in the--in the mid-term election, would it be your inclination to invite the president to come down and campaign or would you ask him to maybe just to help somebody else?

Gov. HUCKABEE: I would still be happy to stand with him any time. And the reason is because while on any given day his numbers are going to be in the tank, I also know that there are a lot of people who, when they step back and look, they may disagree with the policy or even a direction, but there's a sense of respect for someone who will stand up and say what he really believes. I think Harry Truman was that kind of president who, as a Democrat, took a lot of heat. People thought that there was no way the country would even reelect him. He had terrible poll numbers in many cases. But as history looks back on him, they realize that he was a man who stuck with what he truly felt was best for the country.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, governor, we want to thank you for joining us this morning, and we hope we'll--that we can count on you coming back again to be on FACE THE NATION.

Gov. HUCKABEE: Would love to do it. Thanks, Bob.

SCHIEFFER: Back in a moment.

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(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: This week marks the third anniversary of America's invasion of Iraq, and tomorrow the president will deliver the first in a new series of speeches on why we must persevere. We need to hear the reasons. We're in a situation now where none of us--those of us who believe we had to invade and disarm Saddam, and those who opposed it--can say with any real certainty what action will guarantee success. But it's the Iraqis who need an explanation more than we do.

What needs to be explained to them is this: If you can't stop killing each other and form a government, we cannot help you. On this broadcast last week, Senator Richard Lugar, the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, said,

`It comes down to whether Iraqis want to be Sunnis and Shiites, or if they really want to come together and be Iraqis.' In a sardonic column, my friend Tom Friedman of The New York Times picked Vice President Cheney to deliver just that message because, he said, "Cheney can deliver it in the toughest way."

What must stop is the ongoing government effort to sugar-coat it, trying to blame it on the media, or saying it's all going very, very well, as our top general, Peter Pace, did last week. The Iraqis hear that and take it to mean we believe their excuses, and they'll continue to dawdle.

At this table last week, Congressman John Murtha said, "It's not a we problem, it's a them problem." The Iraqis need to be told that. Sure, threatening to leave is a risk, but when people realize they have to do something to survive and they are the only ones to do it, they generally give it their best effort.

We'll see you next week right here on FACE THE NATION.