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*CBS News*

# ***FACE THE NATION***

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White House Spokesman

**Sen. JOE LIEBERMAN (I-CT)**

**COLBERT I. KING**  
The Washington Post

**ROGER SIMON**  
Politico.com

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BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, is the administration moving toward a new strategy in Iraq? When Defense Secretary Gates decided not to reappoint Peter Pace, the current chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it meant that all of the Pentagon's architects of the Iraq war would be gone by fall. What should we make of that? Are we headed toward yet another plan? We'll ask White House spokesman Tony Snow.

We'll also talk about Iraq with Senator Joe Lieberman, the independent Democrat who backs the war. He's just returned from the war zone. How does he feel about it now?

We'll talk about the rest of the week's political news with Roger Simon of politico.com and Colbert King, columnist for The Washington Post. Then I'll have a final word on Congress, the little train that couldn't.

But first, Tony Snow on FACE THE NATION.

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

SCHIEFFER: And good morning again. Joining us now, the White House press secretary Tony Snow, who usually confines his appearances to that podium at the White House. He's out on the Sunday talk shows this morning.

Tony, thank you very much. I can't think of a better time to talk to you. I want to start with Iraq. The secretary of defense said that he is not going to appoint--reappoint Peter Pace. That means, when you stop and think about it, that the entire Pentagon team, or at least the top level of the Pentagon team that took us to war in Iraq will be gone by the fall. Doesn't that signal that there's something different about to happen here?

Mr. TONY SNOW (White House Spokesman): No, I don't--I don't think so. What he was doing is frankly acknowledging an unpleasant fact about politics, that there were going to be contentious backward-looking hearings. He would have loved to renominate Pete Pace. That was his intent, as well as Admiral Giambastiani. But rather than getting mired in kind of a backward-looking debate about what's gone on in the last six years, Secretary Gates made the recommendation and the president approved of it to go ahead, move on, bring in Admiral Mullen, and proceed with trying to do the business of having success on the ground in Iraq.

And you've got to realize, Bob, I think a lot of folks have this notion that everything that goes on in Iraq is military. It's not. The Iraq security plan involves not only military components, but also political and economic components. And those are all things that we're working aggressively to improve each and every day. So the fact is what we're going to have is coherence and consistency. I would not expect any radical shifts in direction.

SCHIEFFER: The Washington Post says this morning, and Tom Ricks, who's their military correspondent, one of the best, he says that the military envisions a post-occupation troop presence in Iraq, he outlines this scenario where you will start drawing down troops there either late this year, early next year, and be down to about 50,000 American troops, say, by 2009.

Mr. SNOW: Well, we've seen a number of reports like that. Keep in mind that anything that happens on the ground is going to be in response to conditions on the ground. Having said that, the president has made it clear that he envisions at some point we will get to one of those sort of Baker-Hamilton Commission report levels where US forces withdraw from the front lines, you've got Iraqis handling all the frontline

business, and you do have American forces in support, able to provide on a rapid basis any kind of support that's necessary to try to augment the security operations of the Iraqis. At the same time, it's also important for the Iraqi government to continue to develop a political basis that's going to encourage people to see themselves as part of an Iraqi government and to cooperate in going after insurgents and foreign fighters and others who are trying to blow up the democracy, literally and figuratively. So you've got all these things moving at the same time. But at some point, certainly, we do want to be in a position to be able to pull back. But that--it's very important to stress--is going to be based on conditions on the ground and on the recommendations of General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker.

SCHIEFFER: Well, you seem to be confirming that story. I mean, basically...

Mr. SNOW: Well, I'm just telling you that...

SCHIEFFER: ...you're saying if things continue to improve...

Mr. SNOW: Well...

SCHIEFFER: ...as you seem to suggest they are.

Mr. SNOW: Again, I'm--what I'm not going to do is get into the business of confirming or denying specifics. What I'm telling you is something that the president has said before, which is, we know where we want to get, now let's figure out how to get there.

SCHIEFFER: How do you think the war is going right now?

Mr. SNOW: I think the war--you know, it's--the war's going as wars go, which is, you know, it's a very complex situation where sometimes you're going to see things moving in your direction, sometimes you'll have--but you'll see setbacks. Upon the beginning of the new Iraq security plan, what did you see? Well, you saw a lot of Sadrists laying down arms, and you saw considerable progress in tamping down sectarian violence. Then you saw an eruption of sectarian violence in May. As General Petraeus said the other day, it's been down, knock in wood, in June. But this is an enormously complex effort. Also, we are still a little bit away, a couple weeks away, from having full deployment of all our forces in the surge, and even then, when everybody's on the ground, it'll take a month or two for them to get fully integrated in the neighborhood to do what they need to do. The fact is that there has been some progress, but, on the other hand, you don't want to get in the position of trying to promote rosy scenarios. This is tough business.

SCHIEFFER: The man who is going to be the new war czar, as they're calling it, General Lute, implied, testifying before the Congress, that the benchmarks the Congress wants to see achieved in Iraq are going to be virtually impossible to reach by the time that the military people have to report to the Congress.

Mr. SNOW: Well, again, we'll have to wait and see what happens in facts on the ground. But if you take a look at benchmarks, the president's been pretty clear in speaking with the Iraqis that it's very important to move aggressively on the political front, get an oil law passed, start working on political and constitutional reform. Those are the kinds of things that they're going to say to the Iraqi people, 'This is your government. This is a government where, if you support this government, it's going to be good for you economically, your rights are going to be defended.' So there's certainly a lot of activity that has to take place on both sides, and General Lute certainly was acknowledging a reality that we all acknowledge. As far as how, when or where you achieve a benchmark, that's impossible for anybody to say. The real question is, are the moves we're making, are they having an impact? Are they changing the situation on the ground? Are they, in fact, successful in combating terrorism? Are they successful, also, maybe even more importantly, in getting the Iraqi people to stand up and cooperate? And what we have seen is greater

levels of cooperation from the Iraqi people and also greater frontline activity and success on the part of Iraqi security forces.

SCHIEFFER: Last week the Congress killed, basically, what had been one of the president's main initiatives, and that is immigration reform. The--are we done with that?

Mr. SNOW: No, no, no. As a matter of fact, this is kind of a classic Washington situation. You've seen it many times before, it--last year, we had a very similar situation on immigration. There was a failure to have a vote on an immigration bill because a lot of folks wanted to debate it more fully. Then Senate majority leader Bill Frist brought it back up, they entertained amendments, they got a bill passed. What's happened this time is--what's interesting, Bob, is that there is pretty strong support, 60 votes or more, for all of the key components of this plan. One reason a lot of people voted against going ahead and bringing it up before a final vote is that they're only about two-thirds of the way through entertaining amendments.

SCHIEFFER: Well, what does the president do next, then?

Mr. SNOW: Well, I think what--really, the question is not what the president does, but what Harry Reid does. Because the Senate majority leader does have the ability simply to say, 'OK, we will go ahead and entertain these amendments.' It's my understanding that a day or two's worth of debate will wrap it up, and they'll be in a position to pass an historic and very constructive immigration reform bill that will, in fact, incorporate a lot of the suggestions on the conservative side, in particular, when it comes to security. Because I think a lot of people have concerns about security, and our message is, 'We heard you.' Take a look at what's going on with this bill. And I believe when people do have an opportunity to examine the final product, they're going to feel a lot of confidence in it.

SCHIEFFER: I--our time is very limited this morning. I want to ask you how your health is. I know you're on a chemo regimen now for this cancer.

Mr. SNOW: Yeah.

SCHIEFFER: How's it going?

Mr. SNOW: It's going OK. You know, it's sort of weird to say you're lucky in the kind of chemo you get, but I am. I do chemo every other week. It sort of makes me woozy for about a day or so. I do it on Friday afternoons. But by Saturday afternoon, I'm right as rain, and furthermore, we had an opportunity to take a look on the inside this week, and it turns out nothing's growing and some things are shrinking...

SCHIEFFER: Well, that is good news.

Mr. SNOW: ...which makes me a happy camper.

SCHIEFFER: Good luck to you, Tony.

Mr. SNOW: Thanks, Bob.

SCHIEFFER: And with us now to give a slightly different perspective, or maybe a totally different perspective, from New Haven, Connecticut, Senator Joseph Lieberman, Independent Democrat, who is just back from Iraq.

Well, you heard Tony Snow there, Senator. He said the reason that they decided not to reappoint Peter Pace to be chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was because it would just cause a contentious hearing.

You're a member of the Armed Services Committee. Do you think that was a good thing for the president to do? Was that a good reason to do that?

Senator JOSEPH LIEBERMAN (Independent, Connecticut): Well, I was surprised by the reason that Secretary Gates for not--gave for not renominating General Pace. It probably would have been a contentious hearing so there's some substance to their concerns. But most any nominee sent up these days, including General Lute, the new Iraq czar who we heard this week, who almost all of us--I guess all of us will support, nonetheless, had a somewhat contentious hearing. I think that Bob Gates has every right to have his own chairman of the Joint Chiefs. General Pace served honorably and well. He's a great soldier, and I think it was time to say thank you, and now let's bring Admiral Mullen on and I was surprised they didn't say just that. It puts Admiral Mullen in an odd position as if he was the--sort of the second choice. He's a--he's a top rate...

SCHIEFFER: Well...

Sen. LIEBERMAN: ...soldier.

SCHIEFFER: Do you think it signals any type of a change in strategy? I guess that's the important thing here.

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Well, we'll see when we talk to Admiral Mullen, but so far I don't think so. I think the president is holding firm and Secretary Gates is. And the firmness, as I can tell you coming back from Iraq, Bob, is that you can't look at Iraq in a vacuum. What we're involved in here, as General Lute said to our committee last week, is the--Iraq is now the main front in the long war we are fighting against the Islamist terrorists who attacked us on 9/11. In fact, 90 percent of the suicide bombers in Iraq today killing Iraqis and American soldiers are foreign al-Qaeda fighters. Iran is training and equipping soldiers, Iraqis to come in and kill American soldiers and Iraqis. So we--we've got to see that larger context, and that's why we're committed to helping the Iraqis to stability and victory.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me just act--ask you about Iran. You brought up Iran. What should we do? Because we continue to hear more and more of just what you're saying. What should the United States do at this point about Iran?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: It's very important, Bob, because I didn't just go to Iraq, I went visited throughout the Arab world and Israel. And what you see throughout the Middle East is Iran in battle basically with us and the moderates, supplying the extremists in Iraq, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas fighting the Fatah faction, our allies among the Palestinians, and, of course, committing terrorists acts against the Israelis. I'm not one to say we shouldn't sit down with the Iranians. I'm glad we did that in Baghdad a while ago. What we did was present them with evidence that we have that I've seen that I believe is incontrovertible that the Iranians are training and equipping the Iraqi extremists to come into Iraq, and they're killing American soldiers and Iraqis. And I think this is a very important moment. If we're going to sit and talk about the Iranians, tell them what we want them to do, which is to stop doing that, because it's killing Americans, we can't leave it at that. I think we've got to be prepared to take aggressive military action against the Iranians to stop them from killing Americans in Iraq. And to me that would include a strike into--over the border into Iran where I--we have good evidence that they have a base at which they are training these people coming back into Iraq to kill our soldiers.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let's just stop right there, because I think you've probably made some news here, Senator Lieberman. You're saying that, if the--if the Iranians don't let up, that the United States should take military action against them.

Sen. LIEBERMAN: I am, and I want to make clear I'm not talking about a massive ground invasion of Iran or--but it--we have good evidence. We've told them, we've said so publicly that the Iranians have a base in Iran at which they are training Iraqis who are coming in and killing Americans. By some estimates they have killed as many as 200 American soldiers. Well, we can tell them we want them to stop that, but if there's any hope of the Iranians living according to the international rule of law and stopping for instance their nuclear weapons development, we can't just talk to them. If they don't play by the rules, we've got to use our force and, to me, that would include taking military action to stop them from doing what they're doing now.

SCHIEFFER: Would you go in on the ground, or could you do that from the air?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: I'd leave that to the--to the generals in charge. I think you could probably do a lot of it from the air. But they can't believe that they have immunity for training and equipping people to come in and kill Americans. It's just--we cannot let them get away with it. If we do, they'll take that as a sign of weakness on our part, and we will pay for it in Iraq and throughout the region, and ultimately right here at home.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Senator Lieberman, thank you so much for being with us this morning. We'll be back in a moment with our roundtable to talk about all this. In a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And with us now, Colbert King of The Washington Post and Roger Simon of politico.com, both here to talk a little politics.

But let's start out here, Colby, with what we just heard Senator Lieberman say. We have heard people say that there are those in the administration that would like to launch some kind of an attack against Iran. He flat out said we may have to do that.

Mr. COLBERT I. KING (The Washington Post): That's what he said. And you know, we have a not insignificant small problem on our hands already called Iraq where we are kind of bogged down, and we have Afghanistan on our hands. And, of course, for every action, there's a reaction. And what is--would be the reaction to a military strike of some kind against Iran? I'd like to hear a little bit more discussion about that because, seems to me, we're taking on a really big problem if we go striking Iran.

SCHIEFFER: Well, there is some logic in saying, 'Look, you can't tell people not to do something unless they know what's in store for them if they don't.' Roger:

Mr. ROGER SIMON (Politico.com): True, but I can't think of anything worse than announcing in advance your military strikes. I would guess that base is going to be moved by tomorrow, number one. Number two, our inability to win in Iraq, whatever that now means, has emboldened nations like Iran. They don't believe the American people and the American administration have the will and the capacity to actually carry out an invasion of their country, a major strike against them. And it would be difficult to imagine the American people supporting yet another war in the Mideast.

SCHIEFFER: Let's talk about a little of what's been going on. What do you all make of this situation? We had the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff not reappointed by the new secretary of defense. That means the deck has pretty much been cleared of everybody who went to war in Iraq from the top on down. And now this morning, The Washington Post has a story saying that they're at work, at least in the Pentagon, on a plan that would draw the troops down and leave about 50,000 there, kind of a post-occupation force.

Mr. KING: That's a military "go long" strategy, that is, to withdraw into some enclaves and be prepared to stay in Iraq for the long run. What strikes me as so difficult about that is, unlike Korea, where we've been there for a long time, there's been a dividing line, they're two countries. The country that has the--we're hostile with stays on the other side of the line. The same thing was true in Germany. Whereas where's the front line in Iraq? That's what you heard Tony Snow talk about the front line. Front line seem to be everywhere. So how do you--how do you really go into an enclave without making yourself a sitting duck?

SCHIEFFER: Well, we hit those post-occupation troops, or however it was they were phrasing it, in South Korea and in Germany, but in those cases, the two sides had stopped shooting at one another. The shooting hasn't stopped.

Mr. SIMON: And the troops were welcome and are welcome, and it's considered a pretty easy tour of duty to go to South Korea and Germany. But I--as to your first point, I think you're absolutely right that this administration is clearing the decks of the Iraq architects: Rumsfeld, Pace, and now with General Lute, war czar, announcing to Congress last week that he would be advising the president on Iraq and Afghanistan, and not Stephen Hadley, the national security adviser, the decks really are clean. It--we don't know what will come of this, but it seems that this is the administration's last chance to say--to make a significant change in its Iraq policy.

SCHIEFFER: I want to ask both of you quickly, what about the failure of the immigration bill? Are we done with that, Roger?

Mr. SIMON: This is a bill that was supposed to be comprehensive; it grew incomprehensible. But someone said it was the perfect compromise, there was something in it for everybody to hate. You know, we saw Tony Snow said, if you peel away these amendments, we can get to the basic bill. That's like asking Congress to peel away layers of skin. The amendments are what gains it support. Unfortunately, warring amendments--I really have--it's hard to see how that bill is going to pass.

SCHIEFFER: I think I vote with you.

Mr. KING: I'm not sure. I think Tony Snow may have a point, that if we could convince the majority leader to keep the bill on the floor for a few more days, take care of some of those amendments, you still might find enough consensus there to pass a bill. Because what's the alternative, Bob? The alternative is even worse than what--than the bill they're talking about.

SCHIEFFER: Do you, Colby, think that the president will give Scooter Libby a pardon? Can he do that politically?

Mr. KING: He can--he has the authority to do it. Politically, it's not going to hurt him to do it, but I think it sends a really bad message. It's not a question of whether one likes or dislikes Scooter Libby. He was found guilty of lying before a grand jury. He's a convicted perjurer. You don't, seems to be, pardon a convicted perjurer without having paid a consequences of this crime.

SCHIEFFER: What is the political impact on Republicans, not just the president?

Mr. SIMON: I think it's a big political impact. The monkey wrench was thrown in by the judge, not in sentencing Scooter Libby, but to saying he's probably not going to be allowed to stay free on bail while his appeal drags out. Obviously, the president wanted to be able to pardon him if he does it, indeed, at all after the next November elections. That doesn't look possible anymore. This is a president who has pardoned fewer people than any president in the last 100 years, and most of them were pardoned after they

served time. The federal guidelines say, you serve time, you show contrition and you wait five years. None of this applies to Scooter Libby.

SCHIEFFER: About 10 seconds to each of you. Who has been helped by the debates that we've been seeing, the so-called debates, and who's been hurt?

Mr. SIMON: I think the top tier in both parties has done pretty well in these debates. One member, Mike Huckabee, of the second tier of the Republican Party--in fact, he is the entire second tier of the Republican Party--has done OK. I don't think it's changed the lay of the land all that much, though.

Mr. KING: Hillary Clinton has helped herself a lot in the debates. I think Obama has held his own. I don't think John Edwards has really gained anything. On the Republican side, Rudy Giuliani at this point.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Thanks to both of you. Back with a final word in just a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And finally today, here is the clean little secret about immigration. For all the noise from the right side of the Republican Party to the left side of the Democratic Party, most Americans want immigration reform, want some kind of guest worker program, and want some way for illegal immigrants to apply for legal status. Actually, it is no secret. Those were the findings of a recent CBS News-New York Times poll. But you'd never know it. The right and the left turned up the volume, drowned out the center, and when the Democratic leader in the Senate was unable to cut off debate and bring reform to a vote, the blame game began. Republicans said the bill could've passed with a few more changes; Democrats said Republicans were trying to kill the legislation with amendments. All sides blamed the president's poor relations with Congress. Excuse me, but when has the president ever had good relations with Congress?

I've never been one to question motives, but I have to wonder is this what both sides secretly wanted? As important as it is, no politician gains much by supporting reform. To the contrary, support guarantees well-financed attacks from both the right and the left. Doing nothing left senators in the best place of all, they could all blame each other and head for the next fund-raiser. The problem is, the problem is still there. The loudest voices prevailed, and Congress demonstrated yet again that it could not muster the political will to confront a major problem head on and resolve it.

That's it for us. We'll see you next week right here on FACE THE NATION.