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FACE THE NATION

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**GUESTS: General JOHN ABIZOID
US Central Command**

Representative DAVID DREIER, (R-CA)

Representative JOHN SHADEGG, (R-AZ)

Representative JAMES LEACH, (R-IA)

MODERATOR: BOB SCHIEFFER - CBS News

PANEL: Thomas Friedman - New York Times

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

Today on FACE THE NATION, the war in Iraq: Will American troops ever be able to leave? We'll ask General John Abizaid, the head of the US Central Command.

With less than two weeks before the vote on the Iraqi constitution, the violence keeps getting worse. Is the insurgency getting stronger? We'll talk about it with General Abizaid and New York Times columnist Tom Friedman, just back from Iraq.

Then we'll turn to the indictment of House Majority Leader Tom DeLay. How much trouble are Republicans in? We'll ask three Republican House members: David Dreier of California, John Shadegg of Arizona and Jim Leach of Iowa.

Then I'll have a final word on why the government has no business knowing who reporters talk to. But first, the war in Iraq 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.

With us now, General John Abizaid, the head of the US Central Command. And joining in the questioning this morning, Tom Friedman of The New York Times, who is just back from Iraq.

Well, General, thanks for coming in. I must say I think you--the generals really caught Washington's attention this week at this hearing on Capitol Hill when we were told that the number of combat-ready Iraqi battalions--that is, those that are able to stand alone--is actually going down rather than going up. Would you set us straight on what's going on here?

General JOHN ABIZAID (Commander, US Central Command): Bob, I'll tell you, this is one of these Washington kind of stories that somehow or other has missed the reality of what's going on with Iraqi security forces. If you think of where we were two and a half years ago, where there were no Iraqi security forces, where they didn't have a piece of the fight anywhere in Iraq, and you look at where we are today, it's a totally different equation. We've got over--close to 200,000 Iraqis in the field today. In parts of Baghdad, they are in charge of the ground. In many of these offensive operations, they have led the way. Their casualties certainly exceed the casualties of American forces. Iraqi forces are fighting and dying for their country, and they're doing a pretty good job in the security arena. No doubt some of the standards that we have set for ourselves and the equations that we gauge their progress with are complicated.

SCHIEFFER: Well, General, the...

Gen. ABIZAID: The real point is, are they fighting for their country? Are they going to be capable of taking over counterinsurgency leads over the next several months? The answer is yes.

SCHIEFFER: Well, le--help me to understand this, though. When you say that three months ago you had three battalions--and that's about 750 people, a battalion--that were able to stand alone, and now you just have one--I mean, what does that mean...

Gen. ABIZAID: Look...

SCHIEFFER: ...if it doesn't mean what one would take it to mean?

Gen. ABIZAID: It also doesn't mean what people are making it out to be in the media. The...

SCHIEFFER: Well, why did they say it?

Gen. ABIZAID: I'm just telling you that they've taken a fact and distorted it to represent the progress that's going on in the Iraqi security forces. Progress is being made. Take it from me, take it from General Casey, take it from the commanders in the field, take it from Iraqi commanders in the field: The offensive operation up there in Tall' Afar, for example, was primarily an Iraqi-led operation. There are operations independently of American forces that go on every day and every night in Iraq that weren't happening two and a half years ago. That's progress.

SCHIEFFER: OK. Tom?

Mr. TOM FRIEDMAN (The New York Times): General Abizaid, it's pretty clear now, as we go into this Iraqi referendum on the constitution, the Shiites of Iraq have said, 'Here's what kind of majority we want to be.' The Kurds have said, 'We want to play as well in the new Iraq.' There's one group in Iraq that clearly hasn't, and that's the Sunnis. What is our political-military strategy to bring the Sunnis into this process?

Gen. ABIZAID: Well, I guess the question I would ask you, Tom, is: What is their political military strategy to be part of the process? They must participate. They've got to be part of the future. They know they've got to be part of the future. They need to have leaders within their community stand up, speak against terrorism, speak against these people that walk into crowds of innocent Iraqis and blow themselves up. They need to say that the Sunni Arab community like it always has will be a part of the future of Iraq, that it will help fight the terrorists, that it will secure the borders and that it will participate in the future and the prosperity of the country. Their participation is crucial. So we're doing everything we can to encourage their participation.

But the other point, Tom, I think is important, and you know this better than anybody else, we have spent too much time in the past two and a half years talking about Kurds and Shia and Sunnis. We need to talk about Iraqis. Iraqis need to step forward to lead their country into a better future. There are a lot of people that understand this. There's still more people trying to hold the country together than tear it apart. And I think the political process, if it's combined with progress with Iraqi security forces which in my mind continues to well will ultimately allow us to be successful there.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: And your...

Gen. ABIZAID: And when I say us, it's us and the Iraqis.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Right. In your conversations with the Sunni leaders--and you've had them throughout the last years, what do you think is the one or two things that they really care about as a community that might actually bring them into the process that they don't see out there right now?

Gen. ABIZAID: I think they certainly want to know that there's an economic future. I think people that were low-level members of the Ba'ath Party need to know that they have a chance to participate in the future.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: So this wholesale de-Ba'athification is probably going a little bit too far.

Gen. ABIZAIID: Well, I don't know that I would want to say it that way, but I would say that the people that were low-level Ba'athists have to know that they have a future in their country...

SCHIEFFER: Well...

Gen. ABIZAIID: ...and it's important to make that case.

SCHIEFFER: ...General, what would happen if this constitution fails now because there is a chance that the Sunnis could muster enough people if they go to the polls that they could defeat it?

Gen. ABIZAIID: Bob, when I think of our own experience of going from the Articles of Confederation to our own Constitution and the length of time and the political energy that went into that, I think that we're actually on a fast track towards constitutional government in Iraq. Now whether or not the constitution fails and the referendum should not necessarily concern us. What should concern us is whether or not the Sunni Arab community in Iraq participates in the referendum politically and in the upcoming governmental election.

SCHIEFFER: So is what you're saying is that if the Sunnis turn out in numbers large enough to defeat this--And what is it? They have to--they can defeat it if two-thirds of them vote against it in three provinces that that might be a good thing because it would show the process is working?

Gen. ABIZAIID: I don't know that I would say it's a good thing but I would say as long as politics is legitimate in Iraq with all groups participating whether it's in a constitutional referendum or the elections for a new government, we'll be just fine. You need to have a legitimate government emerge after the December elections and you need to have continuing progress on the Iraqi security force front. And if those two things happen, Iraq will ultimately stabilize although it'll take a lot of time.

SCHIEFFER: Do you think that no matter what happens that we may be able to draw down troops come springtime in Iraq?

Gen. ABIZAIID: Well, it's never a matter of no matter what happens because you can't predict everything that might happen. You don't know what the Syrians might do. You don't know what the Iranians might do. You can't tell for sure that there aren't more foreign fighters that are capable of being brought into the country by al-Qaida and other outside groups, but I think that the path that we're on provided the government and politics remain legitimate will be a path that will ultimately stabilize Iraq. I'm confident of that.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: General Abizaid, are you happy with the role the Sunni Arab governments around Iraq have been playing? Could they be doing more and in particular what has Syria been up to? You've been fighting a lot now in western Iraq.

Gen. ABIZAIID: The Syrian--the infiltration routes of foreign fighters--and of course I think we all know that foreign fighters are not necessarily the greatest number that are participating in the insurgency. As a matter of fact, they're a small number. But they are dangerous because they tend to be people who believe in al-Qaida's ideology. They come in and they're very, very

dangerous and they kill a lot of people. Like I say, thousands and thousands have been killed by these suicide bombers.

With a country--with the police-state apparatus of Syria, you would think that they could do more to halt the flow of these people who clearly come in starting primarily through the airport in Damascus, than infiltrate over across the borders. You can see that our military activities and those of Iraqi forces have increased out there. But the Syrians could certainly do more.

But all of the Sunni Arab countries in the region need to understand, and I think they all do, that Iraq needs to stabilize. Iraq needs to stabilize in a way that allows all of the communities to be part of the future. If we keep encouraging people to opt out of participation in governance, it's a mistake. If we fail to state that the shameful practice of suicide bombing can be tolerated...

SCHIEFFER: Let me...

Gen. ABIZAIID: ...I just don't know where we're going to have...

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me just ask you about something else. I mean, you say that the Iraqi forces are getting better, but our reporters in the field tell us that they think the insurgent forces are getting better. They talk about these new explosive devices, these shaped devices that they are now using which they say can penetrate any armor that we now have out there. They talk about one blast that went all the way through an armored Humvee.

Gen. ABIZAIID: Bob, every war that this country's ever fought or any country's ever fought, the enemy changes tactics, techniques and procedures and so do we. We have never lost a single platoon-size engagement in four years of combat in the Middle East, and it's pretty hard for me to think of the armed forces of the United States ever being pushed into the sea, out of Iraq, out of Afghanistan or anywhere else out there. We are a dominant military force, and it's true that the enemy is capable of developing things that can do us damage. But ultimately they can't beat us and they know it.

SCHIEFFER: But they are getting better, are they not?

Gen. ABIZAIID: I wouldn't say that they're getting better.

SCHIEFFER: You wouldn't.

Gen. ABIZAIID: No.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

Gen. ABIZAIID: I'd say that they continue to be dangerous.

SCHIEFFER: Thank you very much, General. Thanks a lot.

We'll be back in just a minute to talk about what's going on with the Republicans and the indictment of Tom DeLay.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And joining us now from Phoenix, Arizona, Congressman John Shadegg, from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Congressman Jim Leach and here in the studio, the chairman of the Rules

Committee, Congressman David Dreier. They are all Republicans, and they are all here because of all of these problems that have suddenly beset the Republican Party that sort of culminated last week with Tom DeLay having to step aside as the majority leader in the House of Representatives because he's been indicted by a Texas grand jury.

Chairman Dreier, I want to talk to you first, because I want to tell you what Congressman DeLay said this morning on FOX News. He said, quote, "I am going to continue doing my job. I can do this with or without the title." Now the rules of your caucus are that if a person's indicted, he has to step aside. Clearly Congressman DeLay seems to be saying this morning that, yeah, he's going to step aside, but he's still going to run things. Is that true?

Representative DAVID DREIER (Republican, California): Well, he's not going to still run things. He knows he's not going to run things, but he's clearly a member of Congress, and he's a very important part of the team. Bob, he has an institutional memory, which is key to moving ahead with our priorities, the very bold goals that we have set forward. And I believe we have a great opportunity to succeed with those.

You know, there's been a real rallying around the fact that Democrats and Republicans--in fact, some of Tom DeLay's greatest detractors--have determined that this indictment is very, very thin. In fact, a lot of people think there's not a heck of a lot to it. Even, again, some of DeLay's greatest attackers have been saying that we right now have a lot of things that we have to get done. We're dealing--obviously General Abizaid was just here...

SCHIEFFER: Before we get into what you have to say, let me go to some of the others.

Congressman Leach, what do you think about that? Do you think Congressman DeLay should continue to try to operate, even though he's giving up the title for a time?

Representative JIM LEACH (Republican, Iowa): Well, Tom is now a sitting duly elected member of Congress. His leadership now falls to Dave Dreier and Roy Blunt. But as a member of Congress, he has a right to do anything he can to represent his constituents and the country. But I would stress, this isn't just an embarrassment for the Republicans. It's the Congress itself that's on trial. And criminal procedures are the type of things that members of Congress shouldn't comment on. We all have confidence in the jury system, and let that play out. But in the meantime, I think everybody's intent on just proceeding full speed ahead with their philosophical assumptions of what the agenda of the day should be.

SCHIEFFER: Well, Congressman Shadegg, how do you feel about it?

Representative JOHN SHADEGG (Republican, Arizona; Chairman, Republican Policy Committee): Well, Tom DeLay is a strong personality, and he's going to continue to assert himself in the conference. But we've elected three proven leaders to take us going forward: your guest, David Dreier, Roy Blunt and Eric Cantor, and they're already doing their job.

Look, Washington is a city in which destroying people is considered sport. And we live in an era of the politics of personal destruction. As a former prosecutor, I'm very much aware that Tom DeLay's fate is in the hand of this trial and that prosecutors have immense powers. The United States Supreme Court has said that prosecutors in the exercise of that power need to be guided solely by public responsibility. I think there are grave questions about this indictment, as David Dreier has already said. I do know that prosecutors can drag cases out for a long time, and I know that in this case, there are questions about whether this particular prosecutor has

used his powers and his office for political purposes in the past. Tom will be a force in the conference.

SCHIEFFER: OK.

Rep. SHADEGG: I hope he's treated fairly, and I hope this matter is resolved quickly.

SCHIEFFER: Well, this is not the only problem that Tom DeLay has had, and I'm sure all of you will agree to that. He was admonished by the--your own Ethics Committee just last year. It's not the only problem that Republicans have, either, and that's what I want to talk to you-- is this part of a piece here? Because I have to say, Congressman Dreier, some people--I mean, obviously, your critics are saying that you, the Republicans, have now become what you've come to power to get rid of, and they say that you've become corrupt, you've become power hungry, that it's all about money now. All of the things that you accused the Democrats...

Rep. DREIER: And, Bob, you're absolutely right to say it's...

SCHIEFFER: ...of when Newt Gingrich and the Republicans took control.

Rep. DREIER: You're absolutely right to say it's that--our critics who have leveled that. Frankly, there is really no plan that has come forward from Democrats on any issue whatsoever. And they made a determination early on that they were going to attack Republicans on the issue of ethics. The fact of the matter is--and I'm not going to point the finger at ethical problems that exist on the Democratic side. The fact of the matter is, we are working very hard on our plans to make sure that we deal with border security and immigration reform, to make sure that this referendum that's taking place in Iraq on October 15th is--goes as well as possibly can.

Obviously, cutting spending is a very high priority. We in the Republican conference have rallied around our goal of trying to bring about very important spending cuts over the next few weeks. We also are very, very committed to keeping this economy growing and dealing with the global war on terror. This morning we get the tragic news of this terrorist attack in Bali and Indonesia. Very, very sad. We're dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In my state, this afternoon I'm going to be touring the fires that are going on out there. We're dealing with many serious problems. And I think the American people want us to move ahead with our priorities.

SCHIEFFER: Let me just point out, I didn't invite any Democrats to be on this morning because I thought this was a Republican problem and wanted to give you a chance to talk about it. But you mentioned Hurricane Katrina and this fumbling response of the federal government that we all know about. How much trouble do you think that Republicans are in, Congressman Leach, right now?

Rep. LEACH: Well, I think this could be a very competitive election coming up. Anyone that says otherwise, I think, has their head in the sand. I would just stress a couple of things. It's up to all of us to deal with the hurricane called Katrina. We're off to a weak start. It's getting a bit stronger at the moment, but it's a national calamity. It isn't a Republican calamity. It's national. With regard to the DeLay thing, I would just stress one thing, and behind it is these redistricting problems. And Democrats tend to gerrymander for themselves, Republicans for themselves. Well, let's get behind Governor Schwarzenegger and let's call for fair and honest redistricting circumstances. Be like the state of Iowa. Be like what Schwarzenegger wants to

make the state of California, and let's have Democrats and Republicans endorse the redistricting kinds of things that are at the heart of these charges against Tom DeLay.

SCHIEFFER: Well, Congressman Shadegg, what do you think? How bad is it for the Republicans right now?

Rep. SHADEGG: Well, I think Republicans need to demonstrate that we can move an agenda forward. We got elected on an agenda of limited government, individual responsibility, a free-market economy and a strong national defense. We need to demonstrate right now that that's what we're about and we can get it done. And I would point out that, having selected leaders like David Dreier and Roy Blunt and Eric Cantor to move that forward, we haven't lost a moment. The day of the indictment itself, two committees of Congress cleared energy legislation to address our excessive reliance on foreign crude oil and to encourage the construction of refineries here in the United States. The day after the indictment, we passed legislation to fund the government going into the coming year. It was fiscally responsible legislation. It got bipartisan support. And we also passed Endangered Species Act reform legislation, which also got bipartisan support. Indeed, I think some 40 Democrats voted for it. We have to, as I think David Dreier said, move forward with the agenda that the American people want us to move forward with.

SCHIEFFER: Well, do you think that people would have more confidence in you, Congressman, if you just called for new leadership elections? It takes--What?--50 signatures of Republicans to do that.

Rep. DREIER: Bob, we have a challenge in...

Rep. SHADEGG: Absolutely not.

Rep. DREIER: We...

SCHIEFFER: You say no, Congressman Shadegg.

Rep. DREIER: Yeah. We...

Rep. SHADEGG: No, I think we have very strong leaders. As I already pointed out, even the week of the indictment we moved these issues forward.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Let's just see what the other folks have to say.

Rep. DREIER: We have a challenging eight weeks ahead. We're hoping to complete the work of this session of Congress by the 18th of November, making sure we do our appropriations work; as John just said, cutting spending. Keeping us on the path towards dealing with these very important challenges is really our priority. We have rallied as a conference. Again, the moderates and conservatives have come together with this priority of cutting spending to try and offset the Hurricane Katrina costs. And we are, as John just said, fiscally very, very focused on dealing with the deficit and reduction and keeping the economy moving. And...

SCHIEFFER: Do you think you can still go ahead, gentlemen, with tax cuts with what you're now facing on Katrina and the war?

Rep. SHADEGG: Well, Bob, my view is...

SCHIEFFER: How about you, Mr. Shadegg? I hear you kind of nodding--see you nodding your head.

Rep. SHADEGG: Yes, I think we can move forward with that. Indeed, I think the American people expect us to do that. Those tax cuts have stimulated this economy. We need to look for savings within the federal government right now to pay for part of this hurricane relief, but I think to allow the hurricane to knock us off our agenda would be a serious mistake.

SCHIEFFER: How about you, Mr. Leach? Do you think you can go ahead with tax cuts?

Rep. LEACH: It's pretty hard to have a fiscal balance when you have a war, you have a natural disaster and you have spectacular tax cuts. Now there can be new discipline in spending. There can be a new review of taxes maybe put off a bit. Maybe a few things happen now. But I think we have to be very cautious or we're going to have our fiscal house become an embarrassment not only to future generations but weakness in a world of economic environment at the moment.

SCHIEFFER: What's the first thing you would cut, Mr. Dreier?

Rep. DREIER: Well, let me just say, Bob, that the deficit has been--the projections have been reduced by \$94 billion because of the tax cuts that we've put into place. I'm a supply-sider recognizing the fact that we've generated these revenues because of the cuts.

SCHIEFFER: That was before Katrina.

Rep. DREIER: Well, it was before Katrina but the thing is we can't do anything that jeopardizes the economic growth that we've got going right now. And I think we need to look at some sort of grace commission type of structure to focus on spending cuts and I think that we can come up with a broad range of recommendations.

SCHIEFFER: All right. An independent commission to recommend how to get out of this.

Rep. DREIER: It would be great.

SCHIEFFER: OK. Thank you all, gentlemen. Thank you very much.

Rep. DREIER: Thank you.

SCHIEFFER: Back with a final word in a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally, you have heard me say this before: In totalitarian societies, the government is the only source of news. In democracies, the press provides the second source which its citizens can then check against the government's version and decide which to believe. As you consider that, think about these past weeks. The government put out quite a story in the days before and after the hurricanes. The trouble was it bore no resemblance to what people were seeing on television. Brownie was not doing a heck of a job, and once people saw the pictures from the scene, it didn't take them long to figure that out and to demand action.

Then thing about Iraq. The government version just never seems to square with the pictures. It's hard to know what to believe about Iraq even with two versions. How much would we know if we had only the government's version? Which brings me to New York Times reporter Judy Miller who finally got out of jail after 85 days of confinement because she refused to tell the government with whom she had been talking at the White House. Her defiance bothered some people. They said she wasn't protecting the usual whistle-blowers but ranking White House officials. And for sure, whatever it was that they were up to is beginning to have a real odor about them. But she went to jail for a principle that I believe was correct, and that is if reporters must tell the government who they talked to, they cannot continue to be that independent source of information.

And if these past weeks have taught us anything, it is we need to know a lot more than the government seems willing to tell us about any number of things.

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