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TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "CBS NEWS' FACE THE NATION. "***

CBS News

FACE THE NATION

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GUESTS: U.S. Rep. JOHN MURTHA (D-PA)
Ranking Member and former Chairman,
House Appropriations Committee

U.S. Rep. DUNCAN HUNTER (R-CA)
Chairman, House Armed Services Committee

Gov. HOWARD DEAN (D-VT)
Chairman, Democratic National Committee

Mr. KEN MEHLMAN
Chairman, Republican National Committee

MODERATOR: BOB SCHIEFFER - CBS News

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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 and the midterm elections. The pictures look worse than ever, but the president said absolutely we're winning. Will voters believe him, and will the election turn on that question? We'll cover it from all sides as we hear from Democratic congressman and war critic John Murtha; Duncan Hunter, the Republican chairman of the House Armed Services Committee; Republican Party chairman Ken Mehlman; and his Democratic Party counterpart Howard Dean.

Then I'll have a final word on the man who always stays in the middle, C-SPAN founder Brian Lamb.

But first, the war and politics 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 from Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Congressman John Murtha. From San Diego, Congressman Duncan Hunter. We start with Mr. Murtha.

Well, Mr. Murtha, you heard the president say this week absolutely we are winning in Iraq. What's your analysis?

Representative JOHN MURTHA (Democrat, Pennsylvania; Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee): Well, disappointing to hear him say that over and over again. I've been arguing with these folks for two, three years, saying, 'You're overly optimistic, you're mischaracterizing mistakes.' The public understands better. When--I've--I've traveled all over the country, and people are saying to me we need a change in course, we need to change direction. I hear Republicans saying to me, 'First time I've ever voted Democrat, I'm going to vote Democrat this year.' Independents are heavily in favor of changing the course. We need stability in Iraq, and the troops deserve to hear a realistic, achievable plan. The troops and their families deserve this, and we're not getting it. We keep getting rhetoric, and they keep demonizing the people that have a difference in policy with them. That's not going to solve the problem. You can't win it rhetorically, we got to win it by changing things on the ground...

SCHIEFFER: All right.

Rep. MURTHA: ...and that is redeployment of our troops.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let's talk about that a little bit, because you were a hawk, always have been. And when you said it's time to redeploy the troops, start bringing them home, that's when people really, I think, began to listen. But here's the question I have, Mr. Murtha: You've never really said what you think is going to happen if we do redeploy the troops. Do you think things will get better, or will they get worse there?

Rep. MURTHA: Well, Iraqis have more--they can--they depend more on their people, and they have more confidence in their own people than they have in the US forces. This is what all the polls indicate. I think there'd be less chaos. I don't agree--just because they say there's going to be chaos, I don't agree that that's what's going to happen. I believe the first step is to redeploy our troops. Our troops are caught in a civil war. The Sunnis are fighting the Shias, we can't win this militarily. Any military commander'll tell you this. We put more troops on the ground--we've had 130,000 troops on the ground all this time--water production, oil production, electricity production, all below pre-war level. So you know, they put another 12,000 troops in Baghdad, and it's gotten worse. That is not the answer. The answer is a political, diplomatic solution. And the first step has to be to redeploy our troops to stabilize it, and I think it'll get better. At least that's what the Iraqi people say.

SCHIEFFER: But what--but what is it that you see that once troops are out of there, or on the way out of there, what--what is it that you see that suggests that things will get better?

Rep. MURTHA: I tell you--I tell you what--what's happened in--in this war that--that--that's so discouraging. The way we have to operate is use overwhelming force. And I agree with that; we want to protect American forces. But when we do that, we make enemies. We've lost the hearts and minds of the people. Even the prime minister, in talking to the president the other day, said, 'I'm my own person.' In other words, he's trying to establish his credibility with the Iraqi people. We've been trying to run things ourself, micro-manage their--their efforts. We can't do that. The Iraqis, if they take over themselves, they'll find who the al-Qaeda is, there's more terrorism, there's more incidents. When I spoke out in November, Bob, there was 400 attacks a day. Today there's 800 attacks a day--or not a day, a week. So--so things have gotten worse with our troops on the ground.

What I'm saying is our troops are the targets. They help recruit terrorists. That's the thing that worries me. We need to have a bipartisan solution to this thing.

SCHIEFFER: We keep hearing from people who say the American military is turning against the war. Now, you have a lot of contacts in the military community. Do you think there's anything at all to that?

Rep. MURTHA: Well, there's no question about it. They're frustrated. They--they realize--listen, the plan has changed from--from--from--from weapons of mass destruction, to al-Qaeda, to topple Hussein, to--to stabilize Iraq, to democratize Iraq. We need an achievable plan, and we don't have that. And the military operates best when it has an achievable plan. These folks are going back in less than a year. There's--there's no question about the hardship on a small proportion of people. And we're spending \$8 billion a month--\$11 million an hour. If--if we're going to solve these other problems, like Medicare and health care, and all these educational problems, we have to stop spending so much money in Iraq.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you, one...

Rep. MURTHA: And not only that--yeah.

SCHIEFFER: One quick question here. The president says if we leave, Iraq will become a haven for terrorists. Do you believe in fact that that will happen?

Rep. MURTHA: I think it's the opposite. I--I think more--there's more terrorism throughout the world, and all the polls indicate this. The Iraqis believe this, the people in the periphery in Iraq believe that, and the American public believes the same thing. This has not helped us in the war against terror. We've diverted ourselves from Afghanistan. We had every right to go into Afghanistan, that's where the Taliban came from.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

Rep. MURTHA: But we diverted ourselves to a war of choice in Iraq.

SCHIEFFER: All right. We have to hold to our clock this morning, congressman. Thank you so much for your side of the story.

We're going to get the other side now from Duncan Hunter. He is, of course, the Republican chairman of the Armed Services Committee in the House.

Mr. Hunter, what do you say to Congressman Murtha's suggestion that things are going to get better if we pull out of there? That there's no way it's going to get better if we stay?

Representative DUNCAN HUNTER (Republican, California; Chairman, House Armed Services Committee): Well, Bob, John's a friend of mine. I like John. John Murtha is wrong. We're following the same pattern in Iraq that we used for the 50, 60 years to bring freedom to large parts of this world. And I'm talking about the very simple three-point plan--one, two, three. That is, you stand up a government, a free government, Bob; you stand up a military that's capable of protecting that government; and number three, the Americans leave.

Now, we did that in Germany, we did that in Japan, we did that in the Philippines. We did exactly the same thing in Central America, and we had the same--we had Democrat critics very strongly alleging that we were going to get involved in another Vietnam, that we had--that we were going to get bogged down in Central America. When we stood up to the Russians as they were moving SS-20 missiles, ringing our allies in Central Europe, and we stood up to them, we were going to get bogged down, another Vietnam.

You've got--you've got some liberal Democrats who've died of old age waiting for the second Vietnam. So very simply, in Iraq, we've stood up the government, we've done number one. We are standing up the military, and right now we've got 114 Iraqi battalions that're trained and equipped. My recommendation last week to the president and Secretary Rumsfeld is to send another large number of those Iraqi battalions--not Americans, but Iraqi

battalions--into the fight in Baghdad, because combat operations produce combat soldiers.

SCHIEFFER: Well--well, let me just ask you about that. We keep pouring troops in there and it doesn't seem to be doing any much good. What have we got, 12,000 more troops now...

Rep. HUNTER: Well...

SCHIEFFER: ...in Baghdad, and it seems to be getting worse, not better.

Rep. HUNTER: Well, now--but--but now, Baghdad is a big city. We've stood up 114 Iraqi battalions, and the way for us to leverage those Iraqi battalions is with the embedded American teams. Those are 10-man teams that know communications, know logistics, provide leadership. They embed with those battalions, and you've got a lot of areas of Iraq where there's no activity. So you take some of those folks that are in benign areas, and this--these combat operations are an opportunity for every Iraqi battalion to go in and to get combat experience. And just as you build muscle by lifting weights, you build operational muscle in the military by taking on obligations...

SCHIEFFER: Do you...

Rep. HUNTER: ...operational obligations and lifting those burdens. So let's get more Iraqi battalions in that fight.

SCHIEFFER: I--I get your point. Let me ask you about what Mr. Murtha said he thinks the American military is turning against this war. Do you?

Rep. HUNTER: Listen--no, I don't, for this reason, and it's carried out by polls. You know, when--when Defense News, the magazine Defense News, did a much-ballyhooed poll to ask active duty military who had served in Iraq if they were going to support George Bush or John Kerry, they actually thought that these people who were out there in that dangerous environment, folks like my son who did a couple tours in Iraq as a Marine, that they would resent the president who had sent them and think that maybe he'd given them a wrong mission. By 3-to-1, the active duty military folks supported this president over Mr. Kerry.

And there's another vote that's taken place, and that is a vote for people that are staying in the military, the main combat operators--I'm talking about the 101st Airborne, the 3rd Infantry Division, the 1st Marine Division--have all met and exceeded 100 percent of their re-enlistment goals. That is the people that are in combat are coming back and re-upping.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

Rep. HUNTER: So even if you have some Democrats who don't believe in this mission, the folks wearing the uniform do.

SCHIEFFER: How long do you think this is going to take to you--to do what you

think can be done?

Rep. HUNTER: Well, you know, when we occupied Japan and Germany and the Philippines, we stood up a government, we stood up a military that could protect that government, and then we left. Never in any of the occupations that we've done where we brought freedom to hundreds of millions of people around the world, did we have a timetable. But I think it's going to happen pretty quick. And part of it, ironically, is the insurgents themselves. You take a battalion of Iraqi soldiers and move them into Baghdad, where they get a taste of combat, where they learn unit cohesiveness, they learn leadership, they learn chain of command--they're going to become an operational military a lot faster than if they're in a benign environment. So I think that moving these Iraqi battalions in a larger number into the fight is going to produce those folks a lot faster.

And, you know, once again, Bob, one two three. We stood up the government, we stand up the military, we leave.

SCHIEFFER: All right. And there we have to leave. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

We'll come back and talk about the political side of this in just a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And joining us now from New York, the Democratic Party Chairman Howard Dean. Here in the District of Columbia, his Republican counterpart Ken Mehlman. We begin with Mr. Mehlman.

Well, you hear two very sides to the war. Do you think this election's going to turn on the war?

Mr. KEN MEHLMAN (Chairman, Republican National Committee): I think that they'll be different issues in different districts. I think there are two kind of overriding issues that seem to be applying in most districts and one is the question of whether Americans want to see their taxes go up. Mr. Rangel, who would be responsible for writing tax policy were Democrats to take control of Congress, he stated in his last week in session that there would be across-the-board tax increases affecting millions of Americans.

The other question is, what do we do in the war on terror? And again, that same week that you saw Mr. Rangel make those comments, Democrats voted overwhelmingly against some of the tools we've had since September 11 that have helped protect America from another attack. They voted against an interrogation program of detainees and they voted against surveillance. So I think there are people who are going to look overall at the war and Iraq, according to the enemy, is a central front in that war.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you this question, Mr. Mehlman, at a point where we are at this place in American history where the war is taking American lives, good people on both sides can't decide what to do about it. Why is the

Republican National Committee spending its money on an ad down in Tennessee that seems to be--the purpose of it seems to be to suggest that the Democratic candidate, Harold Ford, is an African-American?

Mr. MEHLMAN: Well, first of all, I think that the most important issue in this campaign in the war and is the economy. The ad that you're talking about is an ad that is being run independently of the Republican National Committee. The committee...

SCHIEFFER: Just a minute. Let's run the end of the ad. Let's hear what it says.

(Excerpt from campaign ad)

Ad Announcer: The Republican National Committee is responsible for the content of this advertising.

Unidentified Woman: Harold, call me.

(End of excerpt)

SCHIEFFER: Yes.

Mr. MEHLMAN: The way that the law works, unfortunately--it's a law that I think ought to be changed--and by the way, it's a law in which people on both sides of the campaign reform think ought to be changed--is that if I talk as I do on a regular basis to candidates like Mr. Corker, then the TV ads that are run beyond a very small limit are run independently of me. This ad is down, I'm pleased the ad is down and I'm pleased that the focus of that campaign is now about questions like the war and taxes.

SCHIEFFER: But you paid for it.

Mr. MEHLMAN: And that's the reason this law needs to be changed. I talked to Senator McCain and I've talked to Senator McConnell, both of whom have been on different sides of the campaign reform issue, and they both agree that a law which says that the Republican National Committee pays for the ad, but that it's also illegal for the chairman of the RNC or the political director of the RNC or the communications director of the RNC to see the ad, approve of the ad or take the ad down.

SCHIEFFER: But--but Mr. Mehlman, the logic of that, if I think something's wrong, but I take advantage of a law that allows me to take advantage of that? I mean...

Mr. MEHLMAN: Well, I will tell you this.

SCHIEFFER: ...that's pretty lame if I may say so.

Mr. MEHLMAN: My--my response to that ad is the same response Mr. Ford had from the race perspective. I would not have put the ad up. I didn't think

that it was necessarily a racist ad.

SCHIEFFER: But you approved of it.

Mr. MEHLMAN: At the same time, I'm glad it's down. I did not approve of it. The way the law works, again...

SCHIEFFER: You said you thought it was fair.

Mr. MEHLMAN: ...the way the law works...

SCHIEFFER: You're on the record saying it.

Mr. MEHLMAN: Well, I thought the--some of the issues raised in that ad, the issue of taxes, I think those are fair issues. On the other hand, I personally would not have put that ad up.

SCHIEFFER: But what does that say? I mean, you talk about values and stuff...

Mr. MEHLMAN: It's--I'll tell you what...

SCHIEFFER: ...that you're taking advantage of an ad when you know what it says is wro--and you admit...

Mr. MEHLMAN: It's says to me that that law...

SCHIEFFER: ...that it ought not to be that way, but you're willing to take advantage of it?

Mr. MEHLMAN: Well, one thing it says to me is the law needs to be changed. If people favor accountability in the system--if people want there to be accountability then it seems to me if the Republican National Committee's paying for an ad, the chairman ought to be able to see the ad, approve the ad, and if he doesn't like the ad take it down. That's not the way the law works right now, which is why I'm pleased that people on different sides of campaign reform issue...

SCHIEFFER: But in the meantime, in between time, you're going to use it for your advantage if you can.

Mr. MEHLMAN: Well, the ad is down. I'm glad it's down.

SCHIEFFER: Well, I mean, what difference does it make? You've made the point you want to make, haven't you?

Mr. MEHLMAN: Well, again, I don't think that was the point of the ad. I'm glad it's down, Mr. Corker is glad it's down. I think the bottom line is to focus on the issues.

SCHIEFFER: What's the main reason people ought to vote Republicans this time?

Mr. MEHLMAN: I think the main reason people ought to vote for Republicans is again if you believe that we should not see a big increase in taxes across the board, then you should vote Republican. If you believe this November that it's important that we have tools like the Patriot Act, like the program that has made sure there's surveillance of the enemy, like interrogation of people like Khalid Shaikh Mohammad, if you believe there ought to be missile defense, if you believe all these tools that we've had to keep us safe at a time we're at war, Republicans have been in favor of those tools; unfortunately most Democrats have been against them.

To the final point, we think there ought to be more judges like Roberts and Alito on the court. The majority of Democrats have been against those kind of nominees in the past, we know in '04 a number of judges were filibustered. We think every judge ought to have an up or down vote, and we think that will be permitted were Republicans to be in the majority in the Senate.

SCHIEFFER: All right. I thank you very much.

Mr. MEHLMAN: Thank you.

SCHIEFFER: I think you're a strong advocate for your point of view.

Mr. MEHLMAN: Thank you. Thanks.

SCHIEFFER: The election will decide which side's right. Thank you, Mr. Mehlman.

Mr. MEHLMAN: Thank you. Thanks.

SCHIEFFER: And we go now to New York and Howard Dean.

Well, Mr. Dean, you just heard Mr. Mehlman. What's your take on that?

Governor HOWARD DEAN (Democrat, Vermont; Chairman, Democratic National Committee): Well, first of all we have no intention of raising taxes, except on the people who got enormous tax breaks, like the oil companies, from the Republicans. We want middle-class tax fairness. We think there's a war that hasn't been discussed, and that's the Republican war on the American family. A million people have lost their health care every single year that George Bush has been president. We need a minimum wage. America needs a raise. Congress has gotten their raises, but the American people haven't gotten theirs. So I think you're going to see a lot more middle-class tax fairness, but you're not going to see across-the-board big tax increases on anybody. That's just the usual scare tactic the Republicans always bring out in order to try to win elections.

SCHIEFFER: Didn't in fact Charlie Wrangle say what Mr. Mehlman alleges he said?

Gov. DEAN: I have no idea what Charlie Wrangle said. I wasn't in the House,

but I can tell you this: The person who's going to be the speaker is Nancy Pelosi, and she's going to control the agenda, and she has said there will not be big, across-the-board tax increases. There'll be middle-class tax fairness. But I think we will pay for that by making sure that the people who got those big oil--those big oil companies who just reported record profits are going to pay their fair share, because they haven't been doing it under the Republicans.

SCHIEFFER: Mr. Dean, a lot of people have said the Democrats have been out of power so long that they're very frustrated and that if they do take power they might go overboard. Some are even suggesting that we might see a movement in the House to impeach the president. Do you think...

Gov. DEAN: I think that is also a st--a scare tactic. If you listen to--to we hope speaker-to-be Pelosi, she has ruled that out. We are interested in moving the agenda forward.

Here's why we're running: We want a tax break--we want middle-class tax fairness for the American people, we want Amer--middle-class Americans to benefit from this economy, not just the folks that have contributed to the president. We want a defense policy that's tough and smart. The fact is, the Republicans have failed us on defense. Iran is about to get nuclear weapons, North Korea's exploded a bomb after the president's been in power for six years and done nothing about it. Osama bin Laden is still at large and we're in the middle of Jack--as Jack Murtha said, a civil war in Iraq. Explain to me how the Republicans have made us safer. We need to be tough and smart, not just try to scare people at election time with tough talk.

SCHIEFFER: Well, then--then explain to me how the course of the war is going to change if the Democrats do capture control of the House and possibly the Senate.

Gov. DEAN: I think Jack Murtha--well we--we can...

SCHIEFFER: Will we--I mean, will we withdraw and will that make the situation better? I'm not saying staying makes it any--any better.

Gov. DEAN: Sure.

SCHIEFFER: But what if you pull out?

Gov. DEAN: Well, first--first...

SCHIEFFER: Tell us about what happens if you do withdraw.

Gov. DEAN: ...first let's figure out what happens if we do happen to win the House and the Senate. The president will still be charge of foreign policy and the military. So the influence of a Democratic Congress will be, I think, a positive influence, but I don't imagine that we're suddenly going to force the president to reverse his course. We don't have the ability to do that. But I think we will put some pressure on him to have some benchmarks, some

timetables and a real plan other than stay the course.

Now what happens if we leave Iraq? If we do what sec--what Jack Murtha was suggesting, I think he's exactly right. And he's certainly in a position to know with 37 years in the--in the Marine Corps. What you'll see happening is the Iraqis will finally get down to the business of a political settlement. Right now they're basically using our troops so that each folks--each one of their different parties can get advantage, hoping that we'll be there long enough so they can take advantage. Well, that puts our guys in the middle, and our troops are great...

SCHIEFFER: Well...

Gov. DEAN: ...and they don't deserve that, and I think they ought to be served better by the civilian leadership.

SCHIEFFER: Do you--do you--tell me what you think--let's say that the president is right, that it does become a haven for terrorists. Do you think that will affect American security?

Gov. DEAN: Well, one of the things...

SCHIEFFER: Should we be thinking about things like that?

Gov. DEAN: One of the things that the Democrats believe, if we should take over and if we eventually take back the presidency, is that we're going to need to leave a force of Special Operations folks in the Middle East--not in Iraq, but on the periphery of Iraq so that we can deal with terrorism in a timely manner. We don't believe having--since the president chose to send us there and has created the conditions of terrorism in Iraq, where there were none there before, we don't believe now that we can suddenly pull everybody out. We'd like to bring as many people home as possible as fast as possible. But most of the Democrats that I know believe that we're going to have to leave a Special Operations force in the Middle East in order to deal with the terrorist situation.

SCHIEFFER: Well, do you believe that if we leave and--and Iraq does go down, that the terrorists around the world won't be affected by that, or won't think that that shows that they're winning and encourage them to try even more things?

Gov. DEAN: Well, you know, that's what they--they--that's always going to be an issue. I say--I saw Chairman Hunter, who I respect, as his son has served two duties--tours of duty in Iraq. You want to listen to people who have--who have sacrificed like that, unlike the sacrifices that the leadership in the White House has made, which haven't been any of those--of those kinds.

But the fact of the matter is, people always talk like that. In Vietnam, we stayed for five or 10 years longer than we needed to stay, and it cost about 10,000 brave Americans their lives. We need political leaders that are going to make decisions--tough decisions and smart decisions.

SCHIEFFER: OK. I have to make a decision here and say time's up. We're just out of it. Thanks so much, Mr. Chairman.

Gov. DEAN: Bob, thanks for having me on.

SCHIEFFER: Thanks to everyone this morning. Back in a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally today, last night the American News Women's Club held a big dinner here in Washington to honor one of television's most recognized and respected figures, Brian Lamb. Twenty-seven years ago, Brian Lamb invented--if that's the word--C-SPAN, the cable channel that broadcasts sessions of House and Senate, congressional hearings and other public service events. And he still runs it. He's always taken some kind of on-air role, and the exposure has made him a fixture on television. But in the age of the blowhard, he has some real quirks, like parking his ego at the door before he enters the studio. Listen to this: in all his years on C-SPAN, the two words he has never said are "Brian Lamb," his own name. He feels it just gets in the way.

What if this rule were imposed on the rest of us? `This is FACE THE NATION, guess who I am'? But here is another quirky thing about him, the one that really counts: He has never lost confidence in the ability of the American people to make the right choices when they have the right information, the full and complete story, which is what C-SPAN is all about.

In a time when so many in government and politics are trying to conduct the nation's business behind closed doors, C-SPAN, bless its heart, has managed to keep at least some of those doors open. We take C-SPAN for granted, but that is no small thing. Thank you, Brian.

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