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

CBS News

# FACE THE NATION

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**GUESTS: Senator JOHN McCain (R-AZ)  
2008 Republican Presidential Candidate**

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

Today on FACE THE NATION, New Hampshire front-runner Senator John McCain. In two days New Hampshire voters will cast their votes in the nation's first primary. Can Senator McCain, whose campaign was in the doldrums this summer, beat rivals Mitt Romney and Iowa victor Mike Huckabee? How can he get independents, who can vote in either party, to pick him over Democrat Barack Obama? Those are the questions.

Then we'll talk about the Democratic race with CBS correspondent Dean Reynolds, who's covering Barack Obama; and Jim Axelrod, who's covering Hillary Clinton.

I'll have a final word on coming back to New Hampshire.

But first, Senator John McCain on FACE THE NATION.

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

SCHIEFFER: And good morning again.

Well, here we are back in New Hampshire, and with us is Senator John McCain, who is hot, hot, hot according to these latest polls. He has now pulled into a lead--a small one, but a lead over Mitt Romney.

And I must say, senator, six weeks ago I never would have thought that.

Senator JOHN McCAIN (Republican Presidential Candidate): Well, Bob, that just shows that you're not very bright or prescient. Could I--could I just say that...

SCHIEFFER: What happened?

Sen. McCAIN: Could I first say that there's still as much as 50 percent of these voters are undecided, so it's certainly--and I think it's still very close.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

Sen. McCAIN: A lot of things can happen. I think--I think, Bob, because we came here and told the truth, people--there's town hall meetings, then there's town hall meetings. People want to come and they want to ask you questions, they want to follow up and they really want to examine you. Buying TV doesn't work. It's the up close and personal encounters with the voters. And they tell their friends, and they examine. And as I mentioned, there's still huge, huge number. And not only do we have the undecideds, but which way do the undecideds go? There's still a lot of Republicans undecided. So there's still a lot to be done here, but obviously I'm pleased with the progress we've made and just telling them the truth.

SCHIEFFER: Here is what Mitt Romney has been telling them. He says, and I quote, "The American people recognize we're not going to change Washington by sending back the same old faces and just have them sit in different chairs."

Sen. McCain: Mm-hmm.

Schieffer: How do you respond to that?

Sen. McCain: Well, I'd like to say that I have never been elected Miss Congeniality in the United States Senate because I have tried to eliminate waste and unnecessary spending, defense procurement reform, etc. But recently, in the last few years, I made the greatest change I've ever been responsible for and was part of it, and that is the change of strategy in Iraq. Not Governor Romney, and no one else said the Rumsfeld strategy's going to fail and we've got to adopt a new strategy that--led by General Petraeus. That has turned this conflict around. We've got a long way to go. Al-Qaeda's on the run, but they're not defeated. But I believe that's the biggest change you can make, is to save young Americans' lives. And I've been involved in--you know, if you think I'm an insider, ask Jack Abramoff, ask the lobbyists for Boeing and the Air Force guys and the people that are in jail now because we saved them \$2 billion--the taxpayers \$2 billion on a bogus tanker deal. In fact, you might even ask former Secretary Rumsfeld if I'm--if I'm not an agent for change.

Schieffer: But what about Governor Romney's strategy now, just attack, attack, attack?

Sen. McCain: Yeah. I don't think that works in New Hampshire. I think that the people of New Hampshire want to examine the candidates, and I think they sort of reject that kind of campaigning. But look, we had to respond to some of the ads, but we've got a positive message out now.

Schieffer: But he says he's the candidate of change.

Sen. McCain: Well, all I can say is that I believe that he's changed on a number of positions, so you might make that argument. But, look, I think he's a good man and I think he's a fine person. We just have significant differences, and those, I think, the voters will examine.

Schieffer: You find yourself in somewhat, I think, of a different position than the other Republicans because you're going after independent voters.

Sen. McCain: Mm-hmm.

Schieffer: Independent voters have always been your strength.

Sen. McCain: Mm-hmm.

Schieffer: So in a way, you're competing against Barack Obama, who's also going after these new and independent voters. Why should they go for you instead of Barack Obama?

Sen. McCain: First, could I say I'm going after Republican voters first.

Schieffer: OK.

Sen. McCain: And there are still larger numbers those who undecided. I've got to win the Republicans. I really do. And we don't know how many of the so-called independent voters are actually going to vote, either. But as far--I kind of flattered that it seems that only Senator Obama and I are competing for the independent voters, which means, I think, in the general election, if he were the nominee, or Senator Clinton, that I could compete with him for independent voters which, as we know, decides elections to a large degree. So I think that what I can offer is a contrast between myself and Senator Obama, who I know and like and respect. And that is that I've had the knowledge and experience and background to make the judgments, to take on the transcendental challenge of the 21st century of radical Islamic extremism.

Bob, the difference up here between now and 2000 was in 2000 we were not at war. Now we're in two wars and a struggle against radical Islamic extremism. I think that obviously would shift people's priorities, and I hope that that would work to my favor when they consider the priorities of this nation in the 21st century.

SCHIEFFER: Let me just ask you a little bit about Obama.

Sen. McCain: Mm-hmm.

SCHIEFFER: You said you like him, you work with him in the Senate. It's clear he's tapped into something.

Sen. McCain: Yes.

SCHIEFFER: And you go to his rallies and you see this excitement that you really don't see in some of the other rallies. What's going on with him, do you think?

Sen. McCain: First of all, could I say I also have known and worked with Senator Clinton, Senator Edwards, and I--and I like and respect all of them. And I believe that they're committed to a respectful debate. We need that now in this country. People are tired of a lot of the stuff that goes on, so--a lot of the negativism.

I think that Senator Obama is talking about some things Americans want. He's talking about he wants us to work together. He talks about putting the country ahead of political parties. I think he talks about, frankly, an American success story, which is admirable. And I think he has a way of communicating with the voters which is extremely effective. And so I admire the job he's done. In his rather short time in the United States Senate, he has been involved in some important issues. And I think if he's the nominee--and, by the way, I would not count Senator Clinton out, or Senator Edwards, to say the least.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

Sen. McCain: But I think that it would be a very interesting contrast between Senator Obama and me, and I think probably at the end of the day we'd give voters a clear choice.

SCHIEFFER: It really is shaping up, isn't it, is a--is a election about generations, in some kinds of ways.

Sen. McCain: Mm, could be, yeah.

Schieffer: I look back, you're the only candidate now with military experience.

Sen. McCain: Mm-hmm.

Schieffer: I think that Senator Dodd is in the military reserves.

Sen. McCain: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Schieffer: I think Ron Paul served.

Sen. McCain: Mm-hmm.

Schieffer: But amongst the front-runners here, you're the only one, and this is the first election in a long time that I can remember that, that served in the military.

Sen. McCain: Mm-hmm. It's very interesting.

Schieffer: Should that count?

Sen. McCain: By the way, you are the only leading political person in America that also has military experience.

Schieffer: Well, that's true. Maybe so.

Sen. McCain: If I might add. Even if you were dishonorably discharged, but I--we won't go into that. We won't go into that, well, Bob? But I think that military experience is a good part of your resume. In other words, I think it offers resume. But I've also got to tell you, people are really going to vote about your vision for the future, how're you going to lead. They'll show enormous gratitude. I think people are glad that you've served this country. I think they're glad that I have, and that members of my family have, my father and my grandfather. But they really want to know what you're going to do for them, not what you have done for them. So you really can't rely on that, except to say 'that will contribute to my ability to lead.' And then I think it works in your favor.

Schieffer: You said at one of your town halls recently that it was OK with you if we stayed in Iraq for 100 years. I mean...

Sen. McCain: You know...

Schieffer: That requires some explanation, I think.

Sen. McCain: It requires some explanation, because I had a--at a town hall meeting, we go back and forth. There was a man there who was very well informed about Iraq and firmly disagreed with me, and we had this exchange. He said, 'How long do we have to stay there?' My point was, and continues to be, how long do we have to stay in Bosnia? How long do we have to stay in South Korea? How long are we going to stay in Japan? How long we going to stay in Germany?

All of those, 50, 60-year period. No one complains--in fact, they contribute enormously, their presence, to stability in the world.

The point is, it's American casualties. We got to get Americans off the front line, have the Iraqis as part of this strategy take over more and more of the responsibilities and then I don't think Americans are concerned if we're there for 100 years or 1,000 years or 10,000 years. What they care about is the sacrifice of our most precious treasure, and that's American blood. So what I'm saying is, look, if Americans are there in a support role but they're not taking casualties, that's fine. We're in Kuwait now, as you well recall there. We had a war, we stayed in Kuwait. We didn't stay in Saudi Arabia. So it's going to be up to the relationship between the Iraqi government and the United States of America.

SCHIEFFER: How would you--how would you assess the state of Iraq right now? Are we nearly there, getting there, a long way to go?

Sen. McCain: I think we've experienced enormous success, but if there's anything that anybody watching remembers about this interview, they're on the run, they are not defeated. They're trying to regroup in the north in Nineveh and Diyala. They are--they have not given up. There are still suicide bombers coming across from Damascus. There are still lethal explosive devices coming from Iran. There are still going to be there terrible, horrific suicide bombing situations. But if we can continue along this path and not withdraw because of political reasons, but because of practical reasons on the ground dictated by one General David Petraeus, then I have every prospect in believing that we will, quote, "succeed." Success: Americans out of harms' way, a functioning government, a social and political and economic situation where people can begin to lead normal lives.

My greatest fear right now, my dear friend, rule of law. Rule of law, which is the fundamental of democracy. There has to be a lot of progress there.

SCHIEFFER: All right. We're going to take a quick break. We'll be back in one minute, 60 seconds.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Senator, you and Mitt Romney obviously disagree over what amnesty is for illegal aliens.

Sen. McCain: Mm-hmm.

SCHIEFFER: He just keeps hammering you on that.

Sen. McCain: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

SCHIEFFER: You say you have never literally been for amnesty. But isn't that hurting you that he keeps bringing it up? Because your answer takes a while to explain.

Sen. McCain: Yeah, it's hard to explain, and the issue of straight talk of illegal immigration has hurt my candidacy throughout this campaign. But, look, I have never been for and am not for

rewarding anyone for illegal behavior. In fact, they need to pay a penalty for that. And if anyone who came into our country illegally cannot be given any precedence over anybody who's come legally. They've got to be addressed. There's two million people who have committed crimes in this country who need to be deported immediately. Then we have to address the issue of the remaining 10 million or so, whatever it is.

But the moral of the story is, Bob, Americans want the borders secured first. They don't want a repeat of 'we said we'd secure the borders and then we didn't and we got more people here illegally.' So as president I'd secure the borders, have the border state governors certify that their borders were secure and move forward with a temporary worker program that is absolutely verifiable so that anybody who hires someone that's not here under that program would be prosecuted and address the issue of the 12 million people who are here illegally. I mean, the remaining 10. We can do that. We can sit down together, Republican and Democrat.

Americans have lost trust and confidence in government. So they didn't believe us when we said we would secure the borders. We're going to have to show them that the borders are secure.

SCHIEFFER: Why have they lost confidence in government?

Sen. McCAIN: Because of Katrina, because of Iraq, because of spending and corruption in Washington. You look at--I never look at the polls, but I do. If you look at right track/wrong track numbers, when you look at approval rating of Congress, the confidence that the government will work for you, they're very, very low numbers. And the next president's going to have, as two really main tasks, one, our nation's struggle against radical Islamic extremism; and second, right along with it, restore trust and confidence in government.

SCHIEFFER: Now, what about Huckabee?

Sen. McCAIN: Mm-hmm.

SCHIEFFER: Let's talk about him for just a little bit. You--if you win here in New Hampshire--and it seems to me you've got to win here, it's very important for you to win here.

Sen. McCAIN: It's very important. Very important.

SCHIEFFER: Then you go to South Carolina.

Sen. McCAIN: Mm-hmm.

SCHIEFFER: He is running ahead of you down there, and I would guess...

Sen. McCAIN: Mm-hmm.

SCHIEFFER: ...a lot of that may have to do with immigration. How do you take on Mike Huckabee in South Carolina?

Sen. McCAIN: Well, we have a number of differences in positions, whether it be the, quote, "fair tax" or a number of other issues. But it'll be a respectful debate. I've gotten to know and admire

Governor Huckabee. I think he's a very--he's come--he has obviously impressed the people of Iowa and the United States as a congenial individual who is--who is a good person. I can assure you that we will have, if--and I emphasize if--it came down to between me and him in South Carolina, that we would have a respectful debate. And I think people would appreciate that.

SCHIEFFER: It's a long way down the road, but would he be someone that you could see as a possibility as a running mate?

Sen. McCain: Oh, I--you know, that's so early that it's--that it's, you know, it's pure speculation. But I think the key is who can best take your place in case of anything happening, and that would be a large number of people. But I got a pretty big ego, but I'm not quite big enough to start bragging about that.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you about something else. Mike Bloomberg, the mayor of New York...

Sen. McCain: Yep. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

SCHIEFFER: ...is going down to Oklahoma to meet with some of your friends.

Sen. McCain: David Boren, and...

SCHIEFFER: Former Senator David Boren, Sam Nunn, Jack Danforth; a lot of influential Democrats and Republicans.

Sen. McCain: Mm-hmm.

SCHIEFFER: People are saying he is really thinking about maybe running as an independent, and if he did, that this group he's meeting with would be a pretty good brain trust.

Sen. McCain: Oh, I think they would be if he decided to...

SCHIEFFER: What would be the impact of a--of an independent, senator?

Sen. McCain: I just don't know, because I don't know how this whole primary thing ends up. If we ding each other up and everybody thinks negatively of us, which I don't think is going to happen, then obviously it changes the scenario. And I see the rise in the independent voter registration.

SCHIEFFER: Do you think Bloomberg is seriously thinking of running? Do you think he might?

Sen. McCain: I do not know. I know him and I admire him enormously. He's done a great job as mayor of New York City. But I don't know if the country is ready for an independent candidacy. I think a lot of it depends on who the nominees are...

SCHIEFFER: OK.

Sen. McCain: ...and how they come out of this race. But I think this may be one of the most interesting election cycles that you have been a major observer of since 1976...

SCHIEFFER: Wow.

Sen. McCain: ...when Jimmy Carter came out of Iowa.

SCHIEFFER: Absolutely. Senator, always a pleasure.

Sen. McCain: Thank you, Bob.

SCHIEFFER: Good luck to you down the road.

Sen. McCain: Thank you.

SCHIEFFER: Good to see you.

Back in a moment with our roundtable.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And joining us now for a campaign quick check, our CBS News colleagues Jim Axelrod, who's been covering Hillary Clinton; and Dean Reynolds, who's traveling with Barack Obama. And both of them, I trust, were not dishonorably discharged from any service, as John McCain just accused me of. For the record, he was joking.

Well, what do you think, Jim? Your candidate seems to have her back to the wall here.

JIM AXELROD reporting:

Yeah. You know, it's such an interesting thing. She is now trying to be more open, more transparent. I think at this event yesterday she took 23 questions--threw out her stump speech, took 23 questions.

SCHIEFFER: Well, in the appearance afterward--and I was there--she spoke for an hour taking questions.

AXELROD: And...

SCHIEFFER: She's answering every question that anybody asks her.

AXELROD: And, look, her campaign has said they made a mistake in Iowa by having her not take questions. It reinforced that image of her being imperious. So they're trying to jump-start things here by showing the open and transparent Hillary Clinton. I'll say this, though, Bob: If this indeed is the tectonic plate shift election, if indeed this is the generational change, there may be nothing she can do.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm. Do you--we keep hearing there may be a shake-up coming in the campaign. Any news...

AXELROD: Yeah.

SCHIEFFER: Do you know anything about that?

AXELROD: You know what, I think they're going to--I think they're going to run through New Hampshire. I know that several very high level members of the Clinton campaign were displeased with what happened in Iowa. From the outset they seemed to have some issues and some difficulties as to how they played things. I think, really, there's going to be a Tuesday--we'll keep our optimism till then, and then Wednesday, if it's another bad performance, Katy, bar the door.

SCHIEFFER: What about your candidate, Dean? Very unusual. And I must say I watched him up here, and when he comes in the room he generates excitement. Whatever else you want to say, agree or disagree, he stirs them up.

DEAN REYNOLDS reporting:

He has a--the ability to turn a political event into almost entertainment.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: And you see in the crowd a lot of undecideds, a lot of independents. And we've talked to many of them, and they're instantaneously converted to Obama the first time they hear him. This is a great attribute for a candidate. What he has to get over, though, is the question, is a great skill at oratory all you need? And last night he got into that in the debate, talking about, well, words do have meaning and words can create change. But I still think that's part of his problem.

SCHIEFFER: What do you--what do the Obama people expect from the Clinton campaign now? Are they expecting them to go negative, or are they expecting to get tougher? Where do they--what do they think's going to be the next move here?

REYNOLDS: Well, they thought they were going to get some of that last night.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: And I don't think, really, that they got much of it. You know, I don't cover Mrs. Clinton.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: But it's difficult for her because if she is aggressive, she gets attacked from people like us who say she's too aggressive.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm.

REYNOLDS: And if she's not, then she's docile. So she's getting whipsawed. And, of course, Obama is now used to this and can play off it, you know, as you saw in last night's debate.

SCHIEFFER: Do we--do you--do you expect them to go more negative? And of course you've got to tell us what does her number one surrogate, President Clinton, do from here on in?

AXELROD: Well, I think that they need--and they'll tell you very directly--they of course wouldn't use the word negative, they want to draw contrasts.

SCHIEFFER: Yeah.

AXELROD: And you've heard this over and over again this weekend, that they want the same questions--the other part of her's saying 'I'm open and transparent' is 'now ask him, ask Barack Obama the same questions you're asking me.' So I think there's a strong feeling in the campaign to really sharpen these contrasts, and hope that that actually matters.

SCHIEFFER: And some of them tell me that there's a split amongst her advisers, that Bill Clinton is a big help or some think he's actually hurting at this point. Would that be right?

AXELROD: I think the--I think the feeling is if this is an election about tomorrow, which Barack has certainly seized that ground--and Edwards is also making that point, that it's about tomorrow, the question just being how to best effect the change, then every time he's up on the campaign platform with her, what's the sort of subliminal thought? The takeaway is 'there's the '90s.'

SCHIEFFER: Hm.

AXELROD: And so I think there is an inherent internal conflict about, is he best serving them? Most popular Democrat in the party. That doesn't necessarily make him the most helpful Democrat to her campaign.

SCHIEFFER: And of course we had Oprah at one point coming in for Obama. Do you think we'll see her again, and do the--do his people think that she was helpful?

REYNOLDS: Oh, definitely helpful. And I think we'd see her again if he needs help. But right now I don't hear much talk about her. But you know, the size of the crowds, the enthusiasm--and she managed to be a star at these occasions, but not outshining him. And that's a measure of his skills, too, that he had Oprah onstage but people were still paying attention to him.

SCHIEFFER: Now, where do--where does he go from here? What does he put the emphasis on? Just keep on keeping on, or will we see anything new?

REYNOLDS: Well, you know...

SCHIEFFER: What about Edwards? What do they think about Edwards at this point?

REYNOLDS: Well, they think Edwards is going to run out of money, and they think the battle is between Senator Obama and Senator Clinton. As we move to South Carolina, if Obama wins in New Hampshire--and he's already won Iowa--then of course they think they can cash in all these African-American voters in South Carolina who have been sitting on the fence because they

didn't believe that white America would elect a black president. Now, you know, 'Here's your evidence, pal. It's good to jump in the pool with the rest of us.'

SCHIEFFER: OK. All right. Well, you guys are going to have a lot of fun between now and Election Day. This, I must say, is one of the most exciting election cycles that I can remember in all the times that I've been coming up here. Thanks to both of you, a lot of fun to talk to you.

Be back with a final word in just a second.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally today, some assorted notes, questions and observations on these early primaries. A couple of nice things happened in Iowa that should not be overlooked. An African-American won the Democratic caucuses in a state that is overwhelmingly white, and race was not a factor. No matter who you wanted to win, it's good to know that can happen.

On the Republican side, it was nice to know that every once in a while an election cannot be bought. Mitt Romney poured millions into Iowa, but Mike Huckabee beat him with a smile and a shoe shine, and not much more. Forget who won and lost, it is good to know that money does not always guarantee victory.

All the candidates are calling themselves agents of change this year, but here's the part that never changes: The winners stress the importance of winning Iowa, the losers explain how that is not necessarily so. My question: If it wasn't important, why did they go?

And here's something that will never change. Once the spin machine starts spinning, it is hard to slow them down. My favorite so far, the Clinton people are stressing their candidate's experience over what they see as Senator Obama's lack of same. To underline the danger of putting an inexperienced person in the Oval Office, a Clinton adviser actually pointed one of our people to Bill Clinton's first two years in office. 'It was just a disaster,' he said. Now, I've been coming to New Hampshire since 1976. It's that kind of stuff that keeps me coming back.

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

