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*CBS News*

# ***FACE THE NATION***

*Sunday, July 22, 2007*

**GUESTS:** Senator HARRY REID (D-NV)  
Majority Leader

Senator OLYMPIA SNOWE (R-ME)  
Select Committee on Intelligence

**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, an exclusive interview with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid on the battle between President Bush and Congress over Iraq. Have Democrats given up on trying to change the president's strategy? And why won't they consider plans put forth by Republicans who have their own ideas about pressuring the president to draw down our forces there? What happens in September if military leaders say they need to keep the same number of troops in Iraq? We'll ask the Democratic leader of the Senate, Harry Reid of Nevada.

Then we'll talk with Maine Senator Olympia Snowe. She's one of the Republicans who wants the president to change strategy, but can't get the Democratic leaders to work with her.

I'll have a final word on what makes a hero. And it's not just hitting home runs.

But first, the war over the war 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 here in the studio this morning, the Senate's majority leader, Harry Reid, one of his, I should say, rare appearances on the Sunday talk show circuit.

So, senator, let's get right to it. Last week you made a very big show of trying to force a vote to begin bringing the troops home from Iraq. You brought in cots, ordered pizza, forced senators to stay all night for a marathon debate on the war. The Republicans finally blocked a vote on that. But now you have blocked consideration of Republican proposals to bring new pressures on the president to change his strategy. Why?

Senator HARRY REID (Democrat, Nevada; Majority Leader): Bob, because that isn't what happened. We offered on many occasions the opportunity for the Republicans to let us vote on the Levin-Reid Amendment, which was also sponsored by Senator Snowe and others. It was a very important amendment, bipartisan amendment that would set a deadline for getting the troops out of Iraq. We also had a number of other bipartisan amendments that had been offered by a number of other senators. I said let's have a simple majority vote on every one of those, and, of course, they objected and blocked it. So it wasn't a question of our not being able to--not wanting to vote on this. We wanted to vote on those. The Republicans in the Senate would not allow us to vote on those.

SCHIEFFER: But you've now drawn down the appropriations bill, which is the bill that these amendments would have been added onto.

Sen. REID: Yeah.

SCHIEFFER: You said there won't be a vote until September. Does that mean

that Iraq is off the table until September?

Sen. REID: No. The defense authorization bill is still on the table. In fact, what I did, hoping the Republicans will lessen their blockade, I assigned Senator Levin and Durbin and their counterparts, which would be Senator McCain and Lott, to see if we can work through this. We had a number of amendments pending, hundreds of amendments; they even blocked those. The ones that--the ones that Senators McCain and Levin had agreed on, so-called manager's amendment.

The war in Iraq is the most serious issue facing the American people. The soldiers have done their job. They got rid of Saddam Hussein, they allowed a democracy to be established, they've trained hundreds of thousands of Iraqi troops. It's time to bring them home now. We've lost 3600. It's cost the United States just in the six years of--six months of this surge \$60 billion. We've lost 600 of our troops during that period of time. It's time they come home. That's what the debate was all about, and the Republicans blocked that.

Now, there--I have to say this, Bob. There were a number of valiant Republicans. Olympia Snowe is going to be on your show later. I admire and respect her so much because she broke from the pack and voted with us, as did a number of senators. We need more Olympia Snowes, people who are willing to do the right thing.

SCHIEFFER: Well, but that still goes to the point, senator. I mean, it is the impression of many people that you do not want to vote now on any Republican proposals because you don't feel they go far enough. And we know the get-out-now crowd doesn't want votes on those--on those issues. The stay-the-course crowd doesn't want it either. Why do you not want to let people vote on that?

Sen. REID: Bob, we tried. I offered on many occasions--not one, two, three, four occasions--many occasions said, 'Let's vote on all the Iraq amendments, all of them, and have a simple majority for them.' The Republicans wouldn't let us. I'm in favor of all this. I've spent lots of time with Ken Salazar, who's pushing that one amendment, Ben Nelson, who's pushing another one. We have a number of bipartisan amendments. The one that they blocked that we didn't get a vote on was a bipartisan amendment. We want to vote on those. It's one of the myths that's been established by this Republican spin machine and--coming from the White House that we wouldn't allow votes on this. We wanted votes on that, every one of them.

SCHIEFFER: So you're saying that if the Republicans agreed to a vote on that, you'd be willing to vote on some of these Republican proposals?

Sen. REID: We offered unanimous consent requests saying, 'Let us vote on Levin-Reid, Collins-Nelson, Salazar-Alexander.' We have a number of amendments, and I offered specifically, let's vote on those. They would not let us vote on any Iraq amendment because they are more interested--minus Olympia Snowe and a few others--they're more interested in protecting the president than they are in protecting the troops.

One simple amendment--let me just give you one example. Jim Webb from Virginia, he has all the requirements of somebody that has the ability to offer an amendment about how our troops are doing. And he's said--and by the way, some of your viewers don't know who he is, a decorated Vietnam War veteran, decorated for courage, his valor--he said these troops are spending too much time over there and not enough time at home. Fifteen months in-country, fifteen months out of country, simple amendment like that. They blocked it, wouldn't let us vote on it.

SCHIEFFER: So in--and we're going to leave this because I have to ask you about other questions--your position is it's the Republicans who are still blocking the vote. They're going to come on and say, 'It's your fault.'

Sen. REID: Bob...

SCHIEFFER: So the divide is still there. But...

Sen. REID: Bob, but the facts are what they are.

SCHIEFFER: OK. And that's your version of the facts.

Senator Feingold, your colleague, said this morning on one of the other shows--"Meet the Press," actually--that he wants to introduce a resolution to censure the president for his handling of Iraq. Would you go along with something like that?

Sen. REID: First of all, Russ Feingold is one of the real thoughtful members of the Senate. He's a Rhodes scholar, Harvard graduate, very brilliant man. And he shows the frustration of the American people and, I'm sure, the Senate. The president's done a lot of things that have been very, very negative. Bruce Fine, a Republican constitutional scholar, has said that he has done more things to take away power from the people and the Congress than any president in history, and he thinks the president should be punished in that regard. In fact, he goes so far as to say he should be impeached. I--we don't--we have 17 months left in this presidency, 17 months. He's violated the rights of the Constitution in many different ways. He's been here as part of a culture of corruption. He has--he's spying on Americans. He has--the Justice Department is now a hiss and a byword. And I'm sure Russ Feingold will try to find a way to offer that amendment. But the Republicans won't let us vote on it. They'll block it.

SCHIEFFER: So would you go along with it if they let you vote on it?

Sen. REID: Bob, frankly, we have so many other things to do, the president's already--has the mark of the American people that he's the worst president we've ever had, and I don't think we need a censure resolution in the--in the Senate to prove that. We have to do...

SCHIEFFER: So you're not going along with it?

Sen. REID: Well, at this stage, Russ is going to have to make his case as why we are going--should do that rather than do our appropriation bills, finish the defense authorization bill, homeland security appropriation bill.

SCHIEFFER: OK.

Sen. REID: We have a lot of work to do.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Fran Townsend, the president's adviser on terrorism, was on another of the shows this morning. She says that the United States would consider using military force if necessary to stem the growth of al-Qaeda and its growing ability to use its hideout in Pakistan to launch terror attacks. In other words, that it's not off the table that we would use American military force to go into Pakistan and go after al-Qaeda. Your response?

Sen. REID: Bob, my response is that we had Osama bin Laden just where we wanted him, Tora Bora. We took our troops away from there and sent them to Iraq. We have the NIE report which just came out that says al-Qaeda, during this administration, is stronger than ever. I don't think we should take anything off the table. Wherever we find these evil people, we should go get them. The fact of the matter is that the invasion of Iraq, the worst foreign policy blunder in the history of the country, has created a area for al-Qaeda that didn't exist before the invasion. But we should go after them wherever they are. They're evil people.

SCHIEFFER: So on that one you're on the same page with the--with the White House.

Senator, do Democrats have a plan to contain Iran and its growing influence in that region. Because if there is a precipitous pull-out of US troops from Iraq, many people think it will greatly increase Iran's influence in that area, might even give them control over southern Iraq and the oil there.

Sen. REID: There is no Democratic plan, including Levin-Reid that calls for a precipitous withdrawal. We have been very thoughtful. There should be a redeployment and after May 1st of next year all American troops should be out of there except those dealing with counterterrorism, training Iraqis, and protecting our assets. No precipitous withdrawal. But academics and military people say Iraq is in chaos right now. Al-Qaeda has an enemy, it's the United States. Even Iraqis, by a 70 percent margin, think that Americans in Iraq are doing more harm than good. So getting the Americans out of Iraq, except for those troops that I've just talked about, I think would lessen chaos rather than increase it. So that's our plan so that we would have the opportunity to spend more time trying to resolve the civil war that's developed with the Palestinians, to do something about Lebanon where we also have a civil war brewing and...

SCHIEFFER: But let me--let me just focus on Iraq...

Sen. REID: ...to have opportunity, Bob, to focus on Iran. And there should

be a surge, a diplomatic surge, in the Middle East.

SCHIEFFER: Some think, contrary to what you seem to be saying, that there would be all-out civil war in Iraq, which would basically come down to ethnic cleansing, if the United States forces left. If that should happen, would that be as much the responsibility of Democrats as it is that of the Bush administration? And what would we do then?

Sen. REID: Bob, what do we have going on in Iraq today? How many people were murdered, throats slit, found in alleys? Dozens, scores. We have in Iraq a situation where we have Sunnis fighting Sunnis, Sunnis fighting Shias, all different combinations thereof. And the American troops are there in the middle of a protracted civil war trying to protect the Shias, the Sunnis and the Kurds, and each one of those groups trying to kill our troops. Is that chaos? I think so. Our proposal, that is redeployment and May 1st have our troops there for three reasons: counterterrorism, protecting our own assets there, and training Iraqis. I think that's what we should do.

SCHIEFFER: What if--what happens if the president decides to continue the surge? We're already seeing some of the generals say we may not know by September whether this has all worked or not.

Sen. REID: We have been told by a number of Republicans that September is the due date. Now, we know the president and his folks this week early on tried to spin it that, 'Well we're not going to be ready till November.' But of course they backed off that one. The American people raised up and they're, 'What are you talking about?' Now they've tried to say, 'Well, we'll be ready in September.' The Republicans in the Senate must follow the lead of people like Olympia Snowe and do the right thing. We're going to do everything we can to put our pressure on the president that what has happened in Iraq is wrong. We must change course, and we're going to continue doing everything we can in a bipartisan manner to focus attention on that and get our troops home. They've worked hard, they've served valiantly, it's time they come home.

SCHIEFFER: Senator, a lot of people say that you are as much for responsible for the partisan atmosphere in Washington as the administration, and you have used some tough terms to talk about the president. You once called him a loser and a liar. You apologized for calling him a loser. Do you still stand by your statement that he's a liar?

Sen. REID: Well, Bob, when I have dealings with people and they tell me one thing and do something else, they're not telling the truth, what else do you have to call them? I'm--I am a person who calls things the way I see them. And as far as my reputation for being partisan, I do my very best to be as bipartisan as I can. That's why I work with Republicans to try to move through this morass we have in Iraq. But as far as my dealing with the president, on a personal basis I like him, he's just fine. But on his...

SCHIEFFER: You like him just fine, but you think he's a liar?

Sen. REID: ...his policies--well, Bob, if you--I don't think we need to dwell on that, but I call them the way I see them. I mean, I thought Alan Greenspan, when they asked me about him, I say I thought he was the biggest political hack in Washington. I--that's how I felt. Why shouldn't I say that?

SCHIEFFER: Still feel that way?

Sen. REID: Oh yeah. Well, he's out of office now, so he's not the biggest political hack. I could give that designation to someone else. And I don't think I'll do it here today.

SCHIEFFER: I suppose I should give you the opportunity to do--is there anybody else you'd like to take off on right now?

Sen. REID: No, I--but if it comes to my mind and I feel after answering question I should do it honestly, I'm going to continue to do that.

SCHIEFFER: Senator, thank you very much.

We'll be back in a minute to talk to Olympia Snowe.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And joining us now from Portland, Maine, Republican Senator Olympia Snowe. She has broken with the president on Iraq. She would like to set some sort of a deadline to begin a withdrawal of American troops there.

But, as you just heard Senator Reid say, Senator Snowe, he says it's Republicans who are blocking people like you who do want to find new ways to bring what amounts to pressure on the president to change his policy. What's your reaction to what the senator just said?

Senator OLYMPIA SNOWE (Republican, Maine; Select Committee on Intelligence): Well, you know--you know, it's unfortunate that we're at the critical juncture we are with respect to Iraq, and also in the United States Senate in not reflecting the will of the American people on this question. And yes, it looks like the United States Senate has been bogged down in procedural hurdles and road blocks that have lead to political stagnation and, unfortunately for the American people, at a time in which they want to change direction in Iraq.

So I understand the leader's frustration. But I think he also needs to understand that we have to reach out and be more bipartisan, that the United States Senate was founded on the principle of accommodation and consensus, and neither of which is evident. Both leaders have to come together to resolve these questions so that it doesn't look like the United States Senate simply is a matter of process and procedures and partisanship and politics to no end. As we saw this week in the all-night debate, there's nothing wrong with an all-night debate if we had had a conclusion to that debate, that we did have votes up and down. And I agree that we should have had majority votes on those questions. But that not being the case, we still should have proceeded

with the other initiatives to see what kind of consensus that we could have fashioned. After all, the House of Representatives passed the Levin-Reid, which I have endorsed. And if we'd gone to conference between the Senate and the House, perhaps we could have worked something out at that point.

But right now is a pivotal time with respect to our policy in Iraq. We should be sending an unconditional message that this is the final window of opportunity for the Iraqi government to initiate the political benchmarks that they view to be essential to national reconciliation.

SCHIEFFER: Senator, as a practical politician and who is one who is very good at knowing exactly where the Senate is at any given moment, do you see any chance that anything is going to happen in the Senate on Iraq before the fall?

Sen. SNOWE: Well, you know, I hope that there is a chance. Probably less likely, because I know that many senators are looking towards September. But, frankly, maybe we ought to be using the time ahead of us to bring up the Department of Defense authorization, you know, reconsider these initiatives so that we can move forward. Every time we have a discussion, move the debate and have votes will bring us closer towards a consensus on this issue. That's the way our position is going to evolve. It's very difficult to get, you know, up-and-down positions in the United States Senate. But what we have to avoid is a scorched-earth approach to legislating that does a grave disservice to the American people. So I would hope that the Senate could come together on this question, look at the various issues. And, in addition to that, the president needs to understand that September 15th is going to be a serious deadline for change in our mission in Iraq. Frankly, I think the leaders, both the houses and both branches, should sit down and begin to negotiate a resolution and a compromise in anticipation to General Petraeus' report on September 15th.

SCHIEFFER: After that report comes out, senator, if there is not a change in US policy, do you believe that the White House can hold the support it now has among Senate Republicans or are--will that support begin to come apart?

Sen. SNOWE: Frankly, I don't think you'll have the support. Just knowing the conversations and the positions of various Republicans on many of the initiatives that have been put forward, I think it underscores that a critical mass is evolving with respect to our strategy in Iraq. If you look where we are today, I mean, it's been eight months since the election, where the American people repudiated the stay-the-course in Iraq, rejected the open-ended, unconditional commitment by the president in Iraq. And here we are, eight months later, who would have ever believed that we would be now committing additional troops of more than 30,000 and the Iraqi government has yet to achieve one political benchmark to reconcile their country and, more outrageously, that they plan to take the month of August off while our men and women are dying in the field? So we're making the military sacrifice--our brave men and women--and yet they are unable to make a political sacrifice to achieve what only they can achieve in the end, and that is to reconcile their country and to take charge of their own destiny.

SCHIEFFER: Already we're beginning to hear American senior officers in Iraq say, 'Well, we may not be able to tell by September if all this is working.' Will the Senate buy that?

Sen. SNOWE: I don't believe so, and, in particular, because what is pivotal and central to the success of Iraq is the political accomplishment by the Iraqi government. And there's nothing to demonstrate at this time that would warrant our confidence that they're going to implement the political benchmarks that they themselves established almost a year ago. And all the deadlines have come and gone and nothing has happened. And as, you know, General Petraeus said, 80 percent of the counterinsurgency plan is political. In other words, that, in the final analysis, there's no military plan, no military solution that can substitute for the political will that's absolutely essential to uniting that country, and it's really up to their political leaders. And so to keep moving the bar for our military commitment, our military sacrifice and our military participation without elevating the bar for the Iraqi government to make those political decisions is unacceptable.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Senator, thank you very much for your insights this morning.

We'll be back with a final word on Barry Bonds in just a moment.

(Announcements)

Finally today, Americans love sports, and we love our sports stars. We also love to keep score--who got the most hits, ran the fastest mile and, on occasion, who ate the most hot dogs. Yet, when Barry Bonds breaks the most famous record of all in the next week or so, Hank Aaron's home run record, a record that has stood for more than three decades, many Americans won't cheer at all. They'll wish he hadn't been the one who did it. Bonds is booed every place he plays except his home park in San Francisco. First, because he is widely believed to be a cheat who used illegal drugs to increase his strength, and second because he is a self-centered, all-round jerk who sees no responsibility to the fans who pay his enormous salary.

It's too bad, really. We want our heroes to be good guys. But maybe we need people like Bonds from time to time to remind us what real heroes are. And they are not just people who have mastered a difficult physical feat. For sure, hitting home runs is hard to do, but so is standing on your thumb, which hardly qualifies thumb-standers to be heroes. We admired Hank Aaron for hitting the home runs, but what made him an inspiration to others was the way he overcame adversity in order to set that record. The homers were just part of his greatness.

Real heroes are not just athletes; in fact, most of them are not--the firemen who gave their lives to save the innocent on 9/11, the soldiers who go into the streets of Baghdad day after day, parents who adopt handicapped children. Heroes are those who set the examples we teach our kids to follow. Barry Bonds is no hero. He's just a guy who hits home runs. Who'd want a kid to be like him?

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