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CBS News

# FACE THE NATION

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**GUESTS: Senator CARL LEVIN**  
**Chairman, Senate Armed Forces Committee**

**Senator RICHARD LUGAR**  
**Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations  
Committee**

**Mr. ED GILLESPIE**  
**Counselor to the President**

**Mr. ROGER SIMON**  
**Politico**

**MODERATOR/PANELIST: Mr. Bob Schieffer – CBS News**

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BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, is President Bush planning to speed up troop withdrawals from Iraq before the American elections? And should we give the Iraqis a timetable for getting out?

There are reports this morning that the Bush administration will withdraw a considerable number of additional troops from Iraq as early as September. This comes as the Iraqis are saying they want a definite timetable for getting out. Is this a good idea? We'll ask the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Democrat Carl Levin of Michigan, and the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, Republican Richard Lugar. We'll remember the life of Tony Snow with his long-time friend Ed Gillespie, counselor to the president. Roger Simon of Politico will be here to talk about the rest of the week's political news and I'll have a final word on the silly season of presidential politics.

But first, is the United States beginning to pull back from 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. Well, there are two real grabbers in the headlines of the big East Coast newspapers this morning. First, The New York Times says the United States is considering stepping up the pace of our Iraq pullout, and The Washington Post says US and Iraq is scaling down negotiations over what to do with those forces; long-term agreement will fall to the next president. That story goes on to confirm what we've been hearing here in Washington, and that is that the Iraqis, before they agree to any long-term agreements about where we go from here, they want some sort of definite timetable about when the United States will have its forces out of Iraq.

Joining us to talk about it, two people who should know something about it: Senator Carl Levin, chairman of the Armed Services Committee in the Senate; and from Indianapolis, the ranking Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Dick Lugar.

I guess, Senator Levin, and I'll start with you, I would ask two questions here. If the Iraqis are saying they want a timetable for when we're leaving Iraq, what is wrong with that?

But first let's address this first issue, the Times reporting this morning that we may be about to speed up withdrawals of troops from Iraq and probably before the November election. So what can you tell us about that, Senator Levin?

Senator CARL LEVIN (Chairman, Armed Services Committee; Democrat, Michigan): Well, that would be very good news if it's true. The majority of the Senate has voted to speed up the reduction of the forces from Iraq; it's the only way to force the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own government. For too long they have avoided that responsibility, particularly politically, and they are still ducking the key political issues. But it would be important for us. And, again, the majority of the Senate has voted to redeploy most of our troops and to have a timetable with goals in that timetable for that redeployment. Instead of resisting the Iraqi apparent effort to have a timetable, we should welcome that. It's long overdue. We should insist that there be a timetable, because there is

no other way to force the Iraqi government to work out those political settlements which are absolutely essential to end the conflict.

SCHIEFFER: Well, have you seen any indication that the administration is planning to speed up this withdrawal--these withdrawals? I would take it as chairman of that committee you would be getting some indication of that if it were about to happen.

Sen. LEVIN: There's a number of indications, both comments of Secretary Gates, also General Petraeus have indicated that we can expect that these reductions will resume in the fall. There's been a number of times that they've said, or hinted at that. I am very confident it's going to happen. The pressure from the American people has been intense. There's now five and a half years of loss of American lives and Iraqi lives, huge numbers of wounded, \$6 billion a month. It's long overdue that we force the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own government. And when they're willing to have that kind of a time line, it seems to me, for heaven sake, why should we be resisting that? We ought to be insisting on it rather than resisting it.

SCHIEFFER: All right. All right, well, let's go to Senator Lugar.

What can you tell us about this, Senator Lugar?

Senator RICHARD LUGAR (Ranking, Foreign Relations Committee; Republican, Indiana): Well, I think there are two factors I would add to what Carl Levin has said. First of all, Prime Minister Maliki has some very difficult political problems. He is attempting to prepare for elections in Iraq and it's apparent that a majority of the Iraqi people would like to serve sovereignty, and that means American withdrawal. So on the one hand he was talking about having the parliament OK an agreement with the United States, but he has abandoned that. And that's why the story, I think, kicks the thing down the road past the Bush administration and maybe past the Maliki administration, unless he wins the election, because he was looking for two-thirds majority. When I was back home, we were being told essentially that these Status of Forces Agreements don't require congressional approval and that the administration was standing rather firm on that. So we were not going to have our vote.

The second factor is that Maliki has a problem with regard to the oil agreement and even, finally, the provincial election agreements. He has people in the Kurdish area who are already are making oil deals, and this is quite outside exactly how that oil money's going to distributed, so that's a real problem. Plus, the people in Anbar, Sunni, essentially are saying, 'We're not really sure the security situation is that sound in Anbar or on the borders, so hold up a little bit before you get this Status of Forces Agreement,' which all leads to, as I say, moving it down the road out of the picture. Now, as far as our troops are concerned, the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mullen, has indicated that we need troops in Afghanistan, but he has no troops to send to Afghanistan. So it is logical in the military sequence that we are going to move troops out of Iraq--not immediately for Afghanistan, but at least to relieve the strain, which is intense right now upon our armed forces. And that is why it may make sense. I read in the stories this morning General Petraeus still may have a word of caution, because he will say with all this movement the goal of America to have a stable Iraq, a democracy that works and so forth, might be in a little bit of jeopardy give the Kurdish oil, given the Anbar security, given other factors which are not quite gelled.

SCHIEFFER: But does it--it sounds to me like what you're saying here is that these troops, while they may be drawn down from Iraq, they may not be coming back to the United States. They may be going right on to Afghanistan, or at least brought back so other troops can go to Afghanistan.

Sen. LUGAR: That could very well be the case, because the demand for troops out there is intense. The battle on the border with Pakistan, with the al-Qaeda forces assisted by the Taliban are a source of more killing of American troops right now than anything occurring in Iraq.

SCHIEFFER: Senator Levin, how bad do you think the situation is--in Afghanistan is? Should we expect troops to be sent out there, more troops?

Sen. LEVIN: Well, first of all, we ought to insist that other NATO countries carry out their commitments to send troops to Afghanistan. The Bush administration took its eye off the ball in Afghanistan when it went to Iraq and let the al-Qaeda leaders escape into Pakistan. There is a real problem from Pakistan. I just return from Pakistan and Afghanistan a few weeks ago. That border is clearly open to terrorists coming across from Pakistan. The Pakistani government cannot be relied on to take on those extremists in their midst, including al-Qaeda in the north, in the tribal areas. And so we are going to have to help Afghanistan do what it wants to do, which is to take on al-Qaeda and the Taliban. But we've also got to insist that our NATO allies carry out their commitments both in terms of troops, but also in terms of the capability of those troops, the willingness of those--the NATO troops to take on people crossing the border and threatening to cross the border. But really Pakistan, as far as I'm concerned, is not reliable when it comes to taking on the extremists in their midst either in the north, in the tribal areas, or in--around Quetta, where Taliban has free run and just crosses the border from those safe havens in Pakistan.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask both of you while I have you here. We saw this weird series of events this week involving Iran. We had the Iranian foreign minister here sort of hinting that maybe Iran would like to start talking about some sort of negotiations leading to lifting the sanctions on their country because Iran is moving forward with its nuclear program, and then we see this show of missiles being fired. We don't know if the photos were doctored or not. It appears that they were, at least some of them.

What's going on here, Senator Levin? Where is Iran on all this and what's this about?

Sen. LEVIN: Well, Iran is a major threat, the biggest threat in the region. It's the source of terrorism; it is a source of weaponry used against our troops in Iraq. We need to have the world united in confronting Iran. We need a much tighter sanction regime. We have not tightened our own sanction regime. We should not only have a prohibition against our companies doing business in Iran, we ought to have a prohibition against their subsidiaries doing business in Iran. So we've got to really tighten the sanction regime around Iran, but we need a united world community, including Russia, to be part of that confrontation. And we've done some things...

SCHIEFFER: Do we need to have...

Sen. LEVIN: ...which put off Russia.

SCHIEFFER: Should we have direct talks with them?

Sen. LEVIN: We should participate in the talks with Iran, but we also got to stop sticking--putting a stick in the Russian eye. Because the Russians have no interest in a nuclear-armed Iran and they are willing to really take strong steps against them, but we keep pushing off Russia in a number of ways. First of all with the missile defenses in Europe, which are not a defense...

SCHIEFFER: OK.

Sen. LEVIN: ...against Iranian missiles; but also, the statement of Senator McCain really troubled me, that we should kick Russia out of the G8, the economic leaders of the world. I think it has the exact wrong effect in terms of including Russia as part of this confrontation against Iran.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

And quickly, Senator Lugar, your thoughts on that?

Sen. LUGAR: Well, my thought, immediately afoul of Senator Levin, we need Russia there; but likewise, we need to have the talks. Javier Solana, on behalf of the Group of Five, of which we're a part, is going to be talking to Iranians. I would like to see Undersecretary Bill Burns around the table there with them at that point. I think it's important that we intervene, that we recognize that the Iranians last week had their missile test. Often they do saber rattling before negotiations. But they're hurting. The sanctions we already have there have made a big difference in terms of their banking and in terms of their exports. There's 25 percent inflation in the country. The regime of Ahmadinejad is in some difficulty. And therefore I would favor more sanctions, more world involvement. We ought to have everybody around the table, including Russia.

SCHIEFFER: All right, well, I want to thank both of you for talking about these very complicated but very, very difficult subjects this morning.

Back in one minute to remember Tony Snow.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And we're back now with counselor to the president Ed Gillespie, former chairman of the Republican National Committee. And not only a colleague of Tony Snow, who died this week, but also a neighbor...

Mr. ED GILLESPIE (Counselor to the President): Yes.

SCHIEFFER: ...and a long-time friend. And that's what we've asked you to come by to talk about. But I have to ask you about these headlines in the paper this morning. Is the United States planning, considering speeding up the withdrawal of American forces in Iraq?

Mr. GILLESPIE: Well, Bob, as you know, this month the last of the return on success brigades, the initial return on success brigades, those five brigades that are coming home and have been coming home from Iraq because of the increased security there and the increased ability of the Iraqi government to handle its own security, and that is a process that was put in place and announced--recommended to the president by General Petraeus, and announced...

SCHIEFFER: But now there are reports that we may go beyond that.

Mr. GILLESPIE: Well, that's always, though, been a possibility. And we're in a period now where General Petraeus and General Odierno and other commanders in the field are evaluating the conditions on the ground as these troops have left, and they've always said that they would come back with further recommendations as to whether or not we can bring home more troops. Understand, it's always been the goal of this administration to bring troops home from Iraq, but to do so based on conditions on the ground and understanding that we do so based on success that allows for a stable Iraqi government to take root.

SCHIEFFER: But when will we think that decision would be made?

Mr. GILLESPIE: Well, what General Petraeus said when he testified before Congress and recommended to the president--and the president announced the return on success withdrawals--that we would--after those were done, we would have a period of pause, strategic evaluation. And we're in that period now, which is why I suspect you're starting to see some reports show up in the media from unnamed sources that this period of evaluation is coming to an end and there may be some additional recommendations coming.

SCHIEFFER: Let's talk about Tony Snow a little bit.

Mr. GILLESPIE: Sure.

SCHIEFFER: Greta Van Susteren over at Fox News said to me yesterday, she said, 'You know, the thing that kind of set Tony Snow apart was that people said nice things about him while he was alive.'

Mr. GILLESPIE: Yeah, that's...

SCHIEFFER: They didn't wait until after he died. It think that was true.

Mr. GILLESPIE: It is true. One of the good guys. And, you know, an interesting thing about Tony, I think, is that he was so good at what he did, whether it was as a commentator, as a newsman, as an editorial writer, as a press secretary or as a speech writer, because he cared deeply about the issues and he was always positive and upbeat and optimistic, and people resonated--that resonated with people. I can tell you, Bob, that I--you know, Tony and I went way back. I knew him when he and I were in jobs that Washington didn't deem to be important, and then I--we were friends when we were both in jobs that were considered important by Washington standards. But I also knew him when he was in an important job and I wasn't, and he was always the same and always treated me very kindly and with respect and--but mostly, I also--we did, as you mentioned, live in the same

area. Our kids were in the same sports leagues and I got to see him where things really matter, which is on the sidelines of the soccer field with his--with his children.

SCHIEFFER: You know, as a cancer survivor myself, I always appreciated the way Tony was very up-front about cancer. He confronted it, he thought it was important to talk about it.

Mr. GILLESPIE: Yeah.

SCHIEFFER: He wanted to make sure everybody knew that you should get your checkup, you should do all the things the doctor told you to do.

Mr. GILLESPIE: Yeah.

SCHIEFFER: I never once heard him say, "Why me?" or "This is unfair." In fact, he said at one point that he thought it may have been the best thing that ever happened to him, because he came to know more about himself, and he was able to get out and talk about it.

Mr. GILLESPIE: And he was inspirational to those of us who--as you noted, after having been his friend and neighbor and having been a source, he and I became co-workers and colleagues in the White House. And he was an inspiration to those of us who worked side by side, shoulder to shoulder with him as he met the challenges of a--of a very demanding job and at the same time waged a fight with cancer, and did so in a--in a way that not only, I think, helped him deal with it, but in his own way helped a lot of other people deal with cancer as well.

SCHIEFFER: You know, we talk about what makes a good spokesman, and one of the things, he had a lot of credibility, because he seemed to enjoy talking to reporters, which getting to be a kind of a rare thing around here lately. The reporters--he seemed to enjoy the briefings. And there was a lot of back-and-forth, but he always kept it at a certain level. It never got personal, it seemed.

Mr. GILLESPIE: Never. And, of course, he was one of the few actual newsmen who became a spokesman and came from the industry itself and knew that side of the business so well. But his jousting with the--with the media in the briefing room was a lot of fun to watch. I always said that Tony Snow's briefings could air not only C-SPAN but on pay-per-view, they were that--they were that entertaining. But informative. And he had a great way of capturing these somewhat esoteric and complicated debates in a way that resonated with people because, you know, like I said, Tony came from a humble background and he had a lot of friends who weren't just in the political business or cabinet secretaries, but maybe ran the hardware store...

SCHIEFFER: Yeah.

Mr. GILLESPIE: ...or worked in the, you know, in the local community. And he stayed in touch with that mind-set.

SCHIEFFER: Well, we just wanted to take some note of Tony's passing, Ed. Thank you very much for coming by today. We really appreciate it.

Mr. GILLESPIE: Thanks for that opportunity.

SCHIEFFER: We'll be back with some political talk and my final thoughts after these messages.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Joining us now with a campaign quick check: Roger Simon, the chief political columnist of Politico and our old friend.

Roger, what do you make of this? Suddenly we're talking about drawing out more troops out of Iraq and before the November elections. Now, you just heard Ed Gillespie say this has kind of always kind of been in the works, and in fact, I suppose....

Mr. ROGER SIMON (Politico): Right.

SCHIEFFER: Well, that is right. But suddenly they're starting to talk about it. What do you make?

Mr. SIMON: Yeah. It may be an October surprise in July. I think anything that signals that the war in Iraq is generally winding down would be good news for John McCain. He has always said that he wants to leave Iraq, too, but he wants to leave it with victory and honor. And if a drawdown of troops is seen to be militarily justified because we're winning, because the surge is working, and not a political trickery because Republicans need it for the fall elections, then that is likely to be effective.

Now, as you accurately pointed out, this may be a shifting of troops from Iraq to Afghanistan. But even that, fighting in Afghanistan is just less politically charged than fighting in Iraq. Afghanistan, the country from where the 9/11 attacks were launched, where there is a clear linkage with our military operations there and fighting terrorism--a linkage which never really existed in Iraq--it is a more "acceptable" war, if you will, to the American people.

SCHIEFFER: Mm-hmm. Now, do you find it somewhat ironic that now it is the Iraqis who are saying they want a timetable?

Mr. SIMON: I think all countries that find themselves with large numbers of US forces on the ground have difficulty. No government wants to be seen to be propped up by foreign troops. And this is the difficulty of the Maliki government. As we've seen in country after country, if you're not a popular government, if you don't really have the support of the people, there are not enough American troops in the world to keep you in power. And America no longer has the kind of stomach for that kind of adventurism. I am sure Maliki has to promise his people that there has to be an end sometime to American troops and, frankly, America wants Iraqi troops to step up and defend their own country.

SCHIEFFER: Very quickly, Chuck Hagel, the Republican senator from Nebraska who is resigning from the Senate this year after his term runs out, it turns out he's going to be making the trip to Iraq with Barack Obama. Do you see any significance in that politically?



Mr. SIMON: I think it's a very interesting use of a Republican to calm Democratic fears. There were some fears raised among Democrats when Barack Obama said he's going to Iraq in part to refine his position after talking to military leaders. Well, the Democratic Party doesn't want his position of getting out of Iraq refined, they want it carried out. Chuck Hagel is very strong on getting out of Iraq, was one of three Republicans who voted to set up a 120-day timetable last year to get out of Iraq. And this is Barack Obama's way of saying, 'I'm still going to get out of Iraq.'

SCHIEFFER: All right, Roger Simon, thank you.

We'll be back with a final word in just a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And finally toady, so here's where we are in the campaign for the most powerful office in the world: John McCain's man Phil Gramm says that America is a nation of whiners and that the economic recession is just in people's minds. McCain says Gramm didn't speak for him. Really? Then why was he speaking? I thought they were old friends and Gramm was a trusted adviser.

And then there was Barack Obama's man John Kerry saying that John McCain hadn't learned the lessons of 9/11. Yes, that's the same John Kerry who seriously thought of asking McCain to be his running mate when he ran for president himself in 2004.

And then along came Jesse Jackson with an observation about Obama that sounded like something out of the Ken Starr report. Which reminds me, what's the deal with Bill Clinton? Are his feelings still hurt? Will he campaign for Obama if Obama helps the Clintons pay their bills? And will McCain get better at reading a teleprompter?

We've been treated to endless conversation, speculation and analyses of all these pertinent topics to the point that a friend of mine said the other day he thought McCain and Obama would be better served if both of them just suspended all campaigning until fall, after the nominating conventions. Just shut it all down: the surrogates, the press conferences, the talking points, the conference calls, all of it. Give all of us a rest. It's not my idea but I wish it were, because what we've been hearing from both sides lately isn't helping them or us.

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