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*CBS News*

# ***FACE THE NATION***

*Sunday, January 14, 2007*

**GUESTS: Senator JOHN McCAIN (R-AZ)  
Armed Services Committee**

**Senator BARACK OBAMA (D-IL)  
Foreign Relations Committee**

**MODERATOR: BOB SCHIEFFER - CBS News**

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***FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS  
202-457-4481***

BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, Senators John McCain and Barack Obama on the plan for Iraq. President Bush's decision to send 21,000 more American troops to Iraq has been met with withering skepticism by Congress and the public. We'll get the view on this plan from both sides this morning when we talk to two leaders of the Senate and two possible presidential contenders in 2008: Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona, who supports the surge; and Senator Barack Obama, Democrat of Illinois, who does not. I'll have a final word on the story that didn't make the front page last week.

But first, McCain and Obama 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 now in our studio, Senator John McCain, and with us from Chicago, Senator Barack Obama.

My guess is, gentlemen, that this will not be the last time the two of you come together to talk about this subject.

Let's start with you this morning, Senator McCain. Clearly we're coming to a showdown now between Congress and the executive branch over the president's plan to send these troops to Iraq. The polls show the public is overwhelmingly opposed to this. The sentiment in Congress is opposed to this. I would point out that when the secretary of state appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee the other day, I don't recall a single senator expressing support for this. Yet, in our interview that Scott Pelley had with President Bush at Camp David this weekend, the president said he is not backing off. Let's listen to this.

(Beginning of excerpt)

SCOTT PELLEY reporting:

Do you think you have the authority to put the troops in there no matter what the Congress wants to do?

President GEORGE W. BUSH: I think I've got--in this situation I do, yeah. Now, I fully understand they will try--they could try to stop me from doing it. But I've made my decision, and we're going forward.

(End of excerpt)

SCHIEFFER: He says he thinks he has the authority, but can he do this, Senator McCain, without congressional support and without the support of the public?

Senator JOHN McCAIN (Republican, Arizona; Armed Services Committee): Well, I think the case is--still needs to be made. This argument so far has been a

bit superficial, Bob, because it's been whether we should increase or decrease or maintain the status quo, increase troops or not. This is about a new strategy, which increasing troop strength is an integral part. And so--and this new strategy--and I can't guarantee it will succeed, but I can guarantee catastrophe if we fail or continue the present strategy--and that is that we will go in, and we will clear and hold and build. As most people know, we have gone in, cleared and left, and the insurgents have returned. This is a chance, under the new leadership of General Petraeus and Admiral Fallon to have a chance to succeed. Do I believe it can cede--can concede--succeed? Yes, I do.

SCHIEFFER: The Democrats, some of them, are derisively calling this the McCain Doctrine. Does that bother you in any way? Because you are one of the few people up there who has said we need to send more troops, not fewer.

Sen. McCAIN: Well, I think maybe I could call it McCain principle, that when I vote to send young Americans into harm's way and to carry out a mission, that I'm committed to seeing that mission through and to see that it succeeds. I don't know what my other colleagues think when they also vote to send young Americans into harm's way, but I feel it's a great responsibility.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you about voting. The Democrats are preparing to bring to both the Senate and the House floors a bipartisan--what they hope will be a bipartisan resolution of disapproval. We hear that some of the Republican leaders are so worried about this that they may try to filibuster it. I must tell you, I have never heard of anybody trying to filibuster a nonbinding resolution. Number one, will you vote--how will you vote on that? And do you think it would be a good thing to filibuster this and not allow it to come to a vote?

Sen. McCAIN: Obviously I would vote to approve--or against a motion of disapproval. I think it'd be foolish to filibuster. The Senate runs in such a way that people can attach amendments all the time. I'd be glad to have that debate. But on this issue, and it's a very important one, if we voice disapproval and send our young troops on their way, as the president will do, what message does this send to the troops, that we disapprove of what they're doing, but we still support them, but not their mission? Look, if these people are serious that oppose this increasing troops and change in strategy, then they should vote to cut off funding. And that way they can then say we tried to stop it. A motion of disapproval I view as purely a political ploy to do further damage to the president of the United States. If they're dead serious, then we should have a motion to cut off funding, and that happened in the Vietnam War, and unfortunately about Vietnam as well as Cambodia.

SCHIEFFER: But if they do bring this nonbinding resolution to the floor, you want it to come to a vote.

Sen. McCAIN: Sure.

SCHIEFFER: You don't want to block it.

Sen. McCain: Yeah, I'd be glad. And it's not practical to filibuster it. The American people deserve this debate. I think we can make our case in that debate and convince some of our colleagues who are, frankly and understandably, agonized and frustrated by this whole situation.

Schieffer: Senator McCain, let me ask you this, do you feel that in any way the Pentagon may be dragging its feet on this? I mean, it seems to me that they ought to be moving forward getting these troops over there if this is going to be effective. And also, what about getting General Petraeus over there? I don't understand. The president says he's going to put the new general in charge, but why isn't he already there?

Sen. McCain: Well, I've talked with Senator Levin, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. He's willing and very glad to bring up General Petraeus as early as next week. You're right. We need him over there. We need Admiral Fallon over there. We need to get the new team in place. Am I worried about the rapidity or lack of, shall I say, enthusiasm in some parts of the Pentagon? Yes. We need to get those five brigades over there into Baghdad. We need the one in Anbar. We need it as soon as possible. We can do it. We can and we need it done as quickly as possible.

Schieffer: Well, should they be moving faster than they are?

Sen. McCain: Yes.

Schieffer: They should?

Sen. McCain: Yes.

Schieffer: Well, why aren't they?

Sen. McCain: I think maybe it's something that you and I learned long ago in the military. Sometimes you can give an order, but it's not always carried out. I think there is bureaucratic resistance in the Pentagon to this proposal, and the people who still believe that the old strategy is--somehow could succeed. But I believe the president is very firm. I think that we will see those troops going over quickly enough as we keep the pressure on, and it's vital that we do so. We--with--we're done with half measures. And this is the last chance, Bob. I think everybody recognizes that.

Schieffer: You think this is the last chance?

Sen. McCain: I think we need to succeed, and I think that if we don't succeed in this change in strategy, we face enormous difficulties and challenges. And by the way, again, the opponents of doing this, are obligated, in my view, to tell the American people what the option is if we do leave. What is the option? It's catastrophe. It's catastrophe in the form of increased Iranian influence, the Saudis are going to have to support the Sunnis, the Kurds are going to have increased problems with Turkey. The list goes on and on. And the bloodletting will increase, which means, to me, that we will be back in there, only under far more difficult circumstances, at some

point. America's vital national security interests are at stake here, and if we withdraw, we have to explain to the American people the consequences of failure.

SCHIEFFER: But you believe that this is it, either this works or we're in an entirely different situation?

Sen. McCAIN: I think this has to work, and I believe it can succeed. I don't guarantee success. We're going to have to have Maliki, who has not been, shall I say, he's been a slender reed, to be far more forthcoming and far more supportive. We've got to get the Iraqi military performing better. There's a number of things that have to happen. But have no doubt of the capability and the dedication and the magnificent performance you will continue to get out of the American military.

SCHIEFFER: The debate up on the Hill has been not only really fierce, it's sometimes gotten very personal. There was one episode that got a lot of attention last week. I want to just show it to you. Senator Barbara Boxer talking to the secretary of state.

Senator BARBARA BOXER: (January 11, 2007) Who pays the price? I'm not going to pay a personal price. My kids are too old and my grandchild is too young. You're not going to pay a particular price, as I understand it, with an immediate family. So who pays the price? The American military and their families.

SCHIEFFER: Obviously, it's the American military that's going to pay, but was Senator Boxer out of line, Senator McCain? Because she's suggesting that because--or some say she's suggesting that because Condoleezza Rice is single and has no children that she can't understand sacrifice.

Sen. McCAIN: I don't--I don't think that's helpful in the debate. I believe in the patriotism and the dedication to this nation of everyone that I work with in Congress, and for to somehow it be related to family matters or others is, I think, totally inappropriate in this debate. We should have a respectful debate in the Congress and in this country. I respect the views of Senator Obama, who is going to be following me here immediately. Let's respect each other's views, and don't accuse each other of lack of patriotism. But I do believe that a full debate will expose the consequences of failure here, and why we must succeed in this endeavor. It's vital.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you one other question...

Sen. McCAIN: Sure.

SCHIEFFER: ...about Iran. Secretary of State Rice told David Sanger of The New York Times on Friday that recent American raids on the Iranians in Iraq after--came after President Bush issued a specific order several months ago to undertake a broad military offensive against the Iranians in Iraq. Do you think that this signals that the president is opening a third front here?

Sen. McCain: No, I do not. But I think it's very, very important that if Iranians are in Iraq paying people to be suicide bombers, to help the training and equipping them and--it's vital that we go after them too. Everybody knows the Iranians are playing in Iraq, and they're trying to drive us out of Iraq so they can assert their age-old ambitions for influence in the Middle East. Everybody knows that. If there's Iranians in Iraq who are doing bad things, go after them, and let's get them.

SCHIEFFER: Senator McCain, thank you very much.

Sen. McCain: Thank you.

SCHIEFFER: I'm sure we'll be talking about this again down the road.

Sen. McCain: Thank you.

SCHIEFFER: Coming next, Senator Barack Obama, who may have a different point of view.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And we're back now with Senator Barack Obama, who joins us from Chicago.

Well, you just heard what Senator McCain said, Senator Obama. He said people who are opposed to this should come out and flat vote to cut off funding. He said it's not enough to have a resolution, a nonbinding resolution. What would be your response to that? Are you ready to do that?

Senator BARACK OBAMA (Democrat, Illinois; Foreign Services Committee): Well, let's talk about a couple things that Senator McCain said. I--first of all, I think Senator McCain has been consistent. He voted for the authorization, and he has consistently pursued the course that we're on right now. One of the things that I strongly disagree with Senator McCain, though, is this notion that we have future catastrophe to look forward to if we start phasing down troops. We are in the catastrophe that Senator McCain described right now. We've got bloodletting taking place, we see great influence of Iran in the region as a consequence as--of us moving forward. And so those of us who object to what I consider to be a disastrous policy on the part of the Bush administration have, in fact, put forward a different approach, one that, by the way, tracks what the Iraq Study Group talked about.

Two months before the Iraq Study Group came out with its proposal, I suggested that if we initiate a phased withdrawal, that provides us leverage to make sure that the Iraqis are actually doing what needs to be done to arrive at a political accommodation. And Senator McCain and the president seem to believe that only a military solution can accomplish our goals there. And every objective observer that I've talked to indicate--believes that, in fact, what we have is a political problem between Shia and Sunni, and it's important for us to get that political track moving. That was absent from the president's speech.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, let's go back to what I asked you. Would you be willing, then, to cut off funds, Senator, if you do not agree with what--sending these additional troops? I mean, that's a tough--that's a tough--that's the toughest choice you could make, I would say. But are you ready to go that far?

Sen. OBAMA: Well, I think this thing is going to proceed in steps. I think the resolution's going to come forward, and I think that will send a message that, in fact, there is great skepticism within Congress and certainly among the American people for this plan. What I've said, then, is, is that we need to look at what options do we have available to constrain the president, to hopefully right the course that we're on right now, but to do so in a way that makes sure that the troops that're on the ground have all the equipment and the resources they need to fulfill their mission and to come home safely. And look, this is not an easy thing to do. The president has already begun these additional deployments, and we, unfortunately, are not going to be voting on funding for several weeks, perhaps months.

SCHIEFFER: Well, there's nothing to stop you. I mean, you could--you could introduce the, you know, legislation yourself if you wanted to.

Sen. OBAMA: Well, that--but funding is going to come through the supplementals, Bob, and the president hasn't yet presented that. But here's the important point. I think that what we want to do is to, number one, measure what is happening in Congress, and I think that you saw in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that there is bipartisan skepticism, not Democratic skepticism, to this plan. The second thing we want to do is to find out are there ways that we can provide some sort of timetable to the president that says, 'Let's start putting the onus on the Iraqis to make certain that they accomplish what, ultimately, is going to be necessary in order for us to have some sort of resolution to this problem. And that's going to be Shia and Sunnis sitting down together and saying that, 'We want to come together as a single country.' That has not happened yet, and, frankly, in my conversations with the president as well as Secretary Rice, I did not see any plan for them to be willing to move that forward. And so, hopefully, as we start seeing this debate move forward, we're going to see a little more flexibility on the part of the administration in terms of putting the pressure on the Iraqis to do what they need to do.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me go back and tell you what Vice President Cheney said this morning on the Fox talk show. He said that if we pull back from Iraq, it would just show what Osama bin Laden has always said is that we didn't have the stomach for this fight and that it will hurt us. It will hurt us in the fight against terrorism around the world. Vice President Cheney also said that if you pass a resolution of disapproval that will really undermine the troops that we're sending over there. In general, how do you respond to those two questions?

Sen. OBAMA: Well, the vice president has pursued this wrongheaded course throughout the process, and you can see the results that we have right now.

It is important for us, at this point, as Americans--not as Democrats and Republicans--to focus on how do we deal with what is a bad situation. I think everybody agrees that it's a bad situation. The specific proposal that I put forward, that is echoed in the Iraq Study Group, does not call for an immediate total withdrawal, and I think Senator McCain and Senator Cheney have been directing their fire at a straw man, suggesting the Democrats have called for a total withdrawal. What we have suggested is that we begin a phased pullout based on communications with commanders on the field to make sure that our troops can still provide logistical support, can still provide the training, can still provide the counterinsurgency activities that're necessary in Iraq; but underscore to the Iraqi government and to folks in the region that what we need is a political accommodation between the Shia and the Sunni.

We cannot impose a military solution on what has effectively become a civil war. And until we acknowledge that reality, we can send 15,000 more troops, 20,000 more troops, 30,000 more troops. I don't know any expert on the region or any military officer that I've spoken to privately that believe that that is going to make a substantial difference on the situation on the ground.

SCHIEFFER: Well, you heard the president the other night. He said that, basically, we had no choice, because to fail there--if we leave, he said, you know, if we don't prevail there, basically is what he said, it will be a catastrophe. Do you agree with that? I mean, do you think there would be no impact if we began even a phased withdrawal...

Sen. OBAMA: I...

SCHIEFFER: ...if the Iraqis knew we were leaving?

Sen. OBAMA: I think there--if we begin a well-structured, phased redeployment in concert with a surge in diplomacy in the region and an improvement in terms of how we deal with reconstruction and how we convene regional powers--including, by the way, the Iranians and the Syrians--that there are risks involved in that approach, but there're certainly no more risks than the approach that is being pursued by the administration and Senator McCain, which suggests that we can simply continue the course that we've been on the for the last several years that's resulted in over 3,000 Americans dying and us spending over \$400 billion with no end in sight. And so I think it's important to understand that the options are not either total withdrawal or a stay-the-course plus, which is essentially what the administration is proposing, but rather the kind of thoughtful bipartisan strategy that's been suggested by not just Democrats, but also Republicans; not just civilians, but also by the military.

SCHIEFFER: Now you know, early next week we expect to have this resolution, this nonbinding resolution of disapproval come before the Senate.

Sen. OBAMA: Right.

SCHIEFFER: Senator Kennedy also says he is going to introduce legislation to flatly cut off funding for an expansion of the war. I take it from what

you're saying that you are not ready at this time to vote with Senator Kennedy.

Sen. OBAMA: Well, I think that all of us are concerned in making sure that whatever resolutions or legislation or proposals that are out there don't potentially strand troops that are already there. I am fully supportive of Senator Kennedy's intent, and I think Senator Levin is as well, and the majority of the Democratic caucus is interested in figuring out how do we constrain the president. I personally think that if there are ways that we can constrain and condition what the president's doing so that four to six months from now we are beginning a phased withdrawal while making sure that the troops on the ground have the equipment that they need to succeed, then that is going to be the area that I'm most interested in supporting.

SCHIEFFER: OK. Well, we're about out of time, senator, but I have to ask you the question. We hear that you may announce sooner than later whether or not you're going to seek the Democratic presidential nomination. Some are saying as early as next week. What can you tell us?

Sen. OBAMA: Well, the--I will have something to say about that fairly soon, Bob, and obviously there's been a lot of talk. It's something that I've been considering. I've said I've been considering it, and we'll be making an announcement fairly soon.

SCHIEFFER: Days or weeks?

Sen. OBAMA: It'll be--it'll be pretty soon, Bob.

SCHIEFFER: All right, thank you very much, senator.

Sen. OBAMA: Great to talk to you, thank you.

SCHIEFFER: Back in a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally today, The New York Times slogan has always been, "All the news that's fit to print." But what is more likely to wind up in our newspapers and on TV is, 'All the news there is room for.' The Iraq story pushed almost everything off the front pages and the TV news last week, as it should have. But when that happens, I always comb the inside pages for stories that deserved more attention.

My nominee for last week's story that shouldn't be overlooked came from The Washington Post, had nothing to do with Iraq, and involved a little known California congressman, John T. Doolittle. It's even a positive story of sorts. Congressman Doolittle said he is going to change his ways, and he is candid about the reason. He almost got beat the last election. What's he going to do? He has decided to replace his wife as his campaign fund-raiser. That means she can no longer take a 15 percent cut of the money donated to his campaigns and put it in the family bank account. Over the last three years,

she has enriched the family fortune by \$100,000, which is not bad as walking around money goes.

Now, I'm glad that Congressman Doolittle is making things right. He's also promised to hold more news conferences. Wow! That's a sacrifice. But it does underline what a joke our campaign finance laws have become, and it begs the question, are other members of Congress availing themselves of this little fringe benefit? Now that this story is out, I have a feeling we may get the answer to that sometime soon. It may even wind up on the front pages.

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