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FACE THE NATION

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GUESTS: Representative JOHN MURTHA (D-PA)
Member, House Appropriations
Committee

Senator RICHARD LUGAR (R-IN)
Chairman, U.S. Foreign Relations
Committee

MODERATOR: BOB SCHIEFFER - CBS News

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

Today on FACE THE NATION, three issues: the situation in Iraq, the Iranian nuclear program and the ports controversy. Are US troops in Iraq making the situation worse? That is what Congressman Jack Murtha believes, even though the US commander in Iraq says the current crisis has passed. What would happen if US troops left? Iran is threatening to speed up its nuclear program. What should the US do and what about that port arrangement? These are the questions for Congressman Murtha, Democrat of Pennsylvania, and the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Richard Lugar, Republican of Indiana. I'll have a final word on the Katrina tapes. But first, Iraq again 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 in the studio, Congressman John Murtha. Of course, he is an ex-Marine; he was wounded in Vietnam; he was a hawk on Iraq. But then last November, he said it is time to bring the troops home, and it rekindled the debate, made it even fiercer.

Congressman Murtha, thank you for coming this morning, and I want to start by quoting something that General Peter Pace, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said this morning on "Meet the Press." He said he believes the war in Iraq is going, in his words, "very, very well." What is your assessment?

Representative JACK MURTHA (Democrat, Pennsylvania; House Appropriations Committee): Why would I believe him? I mean, that administration, this administration, including the president, had mischaracterized this war for the last two years. They, first of all, they said it will take 40,000 troops to settle this thing right after the invasion. Then they said there's no insurgency. They're dead-enders is what the secretary of defense said. On and on and on, the mischaracterization of the war. They said there's nuclear weapons. There are no nuclear weapons there. There are no biological weapons there. No al-Qaeda connection. So why would I believe the chairman of the joint chiefs when he says things are going well. I ask my staff--when my staff--when they make a statement like this, I say, 'Look, look in the latest report that the State Department puts out, the Weekly Report, and tell me how much progress we've made.' So they look at it, and we've made no progress at all. Sixty percent unemployment, the Iraqis want us out of there. Eighty percent of the Iraqis want us out of there. Oil production below prewar level. Water production, only 30 percent of the people getting water. Now our troops are being fed well and being taken care of. They're doing everything they can do militarily. But they're in a situation where they're caught in a civil war. And there's two participants fighting for survival and fighting for supremacy inside that country, and that's my definition of a civil war.

So I don't believe the secretary. I think we're not making progress. We're caught in a civil war. We've lost almost 20,000 people in this war, if you count the casualties and the people who've been killed in the three years

we've been involved.

SCHIEFFER: Now I'm going to make sure I understand. I mean, I think I understand what you're saying, but you're talking about a Marine and here you are an ex-Marine. This is a military man. This is not--this is not somebody, some civilian out there at the Pentagon. You're saying you no longer believe what Marine General Peter Pace says when he says he thinks things are going well.

Rep. MURTHA: That's exactly right. Why would I believe him with all the misstatements and mischaracterizations they've made over the last two years? And the public is way ahead of what's going on in Washington. They no longer believe. The troops themselves, 70 percent of the troops said, 'We want to come home within a year.' The only solution to this is redeploy. Let me tell you, the only people who want us in Iraq is Iran and al-Qaeda, and I talked to a top level commander the other day, who's--about two weeks ago, and he said China wants us there also. Why? Because we're depleting our resources. Our phys--our mental--not our mental--our troop resources and our fiscal resources.

SCHIEFFER: Well, now, Congressman, when you say al-Qaeda wants us there, why would al-Qaeda want us there?

Rep. MURTHA: Because we're depleting our resources. A very small proportion to what's going on in Iraq, and they've diverted their attention away from the war on terrorism. The war on terrorism is worldwide, and in Iraq, it's a civil war, and we've diverted ourselves away from that war on terror, we're sending--spending our resources on--and we're caught in a civil war, which are mostly Iraqis. Al-Qaeda's a very small proportion of the number of people fighting in Iraq. Iraq will take care of this themselves. One of the problems I see, and frustrating thing is our ambassador keeps giving advice to the Iraqis. Every time we give them advice, they vote for somebody else. Chalabi gets 1 percent of the vote, he was our guy, he was the Defense Department guy; Allawi, who was the State Department guy, he got 8 percent of the vote. And I asked Director Negroponte the other day, I says, 'You know, how come he only got 8 percent of the vote?' 'Well, he's a good man.' Well, that's not a point. The Iraqis don't pay attention to our advice. Eighty percent of them want us out of there; 47 percent say it's justified to kill Americans. So we're caught in a civil war, and I'm convinced that we've diverted ourselves away from the fight on terrorism.

SCHIEFFER: But let me just ask you this, because you have said before, and I believe this is a direct quote, you say, "Only 750 to 1,000 terrorists are in Iraq and that Iraqis will kill or force them out if we leave." Why would it be easier for them to do that if we leave than if we stay?

Rep. MURTHA: Well, when I say terrorists, I'm saying al-Qaeda.

SCHIEFFER: Al-Qaeda.

Rep. MURTHA: They're using terrorist tactics--the Iraqis are using terrorist

tactics. But I'm convinced they know where they are, they know who they are, but they won't tell us because they've turned against us. We've lost the hearts and minds of the people. Bob, I said on the floor of the House when the first supplemental came up, the \$87 billion, the most important part of that supplemental was the reconstruction, we had to win the hearts and minds of the people, we had to get water supply, we had to get unemployment down, we had to do all the things, electricity. Now, we've got generators, our troops have air conditioning in--not the troops in the field, but the commanders and so forth. So they sit in their air-conditioned places, and they have good food, and they're well--the Iraqis know this, and they--and as they see the casualties, they start to turn against us. Our troops are doing everything they can. I go to the hospitals all the time, I've seen for a year the morale was starting to deteriorate because they don't believe there's a mission, it's open-ended, there's no point to them being there. Because they're--when they go out--`What's your mission?' I'll say to them after I question them for a while and talk to them, and they say, `Well, my mission was to find IEDs.' And that means the way they find them is blow them up and lose a leg or lose an arm or be blinded, as I saw the other day, or lose both his hands, like I saw.

SCHIEFFER: Congressman, why do you think that the Iraqis are having such a difficult time training their people? We keep being told that we've got to get this force trained up. How long does it take the Marines to make a Marine out of a recruit, what, 16 weeks?

Rep. MURTHA: Well, it takes about 16 weeks, but then you go into the training of the units themselves. So I'd say it would take a year. We suggested to them--we said to this administration two years ago, `You've got to start training Iraqis.' They didn't do it seriously until a year ago, and now they went from one unit being trained to no units being trained. So, you know, the thing is the rhetoric is so frustrating. When they keep making statements which are very optimistic and then it turns out to be the opposite. And the public has caught onto that, and they're very pessimistic about the outcome.

SCHIEFFER: What do you sense that the Republicans in Congress want to happen here?

Rep. MURTHA: Well, it's interesting, they--a lot of Democrats say to me, `You know, you're helping the Republicans, because if they start to get out, if they get a schedule and time table to get out, which I think they need to do, it'll help the Republicans. So they may not say it privately, but they understand how serious this is. When you have the public against it, when you have the troops against what we're doing, when you have the people in Iraq against it, when you have the periphery against what we're doing, you have to understand that it's going to have a dramatic impact on the outcome of the election. I think right now I'd predict there's going to be a big turnover in Congress because people are so dissatisfied with a lot of things, the way they've handled and mishandled the war, Katrina and, of course, natural gas prices, the Medicare problem, all those things are weighing--just like it did in '94.

SCHIEFFER: Congressman, where do you come down on this whole controversy over whether an Arab country should be allowed to operate key ports in this country?

Rep. MURTHA: Well, it's an interesting thing. Roosevelt said--President Roosevelt said, "The only thing you have to fear is fear itself," when--when he talked about World War II when World War II started. These guys have used fear as a club, and so then they wonder why the American people would react so viscerally when they talk about letting the Arabs take over the ports. It's no surprise to me. Now you know...

SCHIEFFER: Do you think they should be allowed to take them over?

Rep. MURTHA: Well, I--I have mixed feelings about it. I really haven't seen enough about it. I mean, my initial reaction was against it, but I said, 'Let me take a look at it before I can make up my mind.' Dubai's been a good ally, but I say I'd have to vote against it right now. I'd have to say that with all the--the concerns I have about security at the ports, which is not the best in the world, that I'm not sure I'd like Dubai taking over the ports.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you also about this statement by Iran this morning. The Iranian government says that if this whole situation about whether or not they can produce enriched uranium goes to the United Nations, they're just going to speed up the process, which is what the West says is another step toward building a nuclear weapon. What should we be doing about Iran right now?

Rep. MURTHA: Let me tell you Bob, that's the problem we have. One of the reasons I spoke out after trying to do this privately--and for years and years I've done everything behind the scenes, tried not to speak publicly about many of these things, trying to give advice to the presidents--but--but here, we--we have a situation where our military's in such bad shape it couldn't deploy to a second front. And the Iranians know this. This is not something I'm telling the Iranians. North Korea knows it, China knows it. We're depleting our resources in Iraq, which is a civil war. We should--we should redeploy out of there and--and re--redo the Army--redo our military so--so that we can prevent a war. And second, so we can say to Iran, 'Look fellas, you know, we--you have to be very careful about what you do because we can use military force.'

SCHIEFFER: But I guess the one thing that worries me about it, if we just left, is it going to send a signal that they're going to take this to mean that they defeated us, and won't that just give them--won't their morale go up and--and cause them to try us in another place?

Rep. MURTHA: Well...

SCHIEFFER: Perhaps here?

Rep. MURTHA: I--I know that--that's the common theory, because that's the fear that they try to--to sell to the American people. I don't see that at

all. There was no terrorism in Iraq before at all. Iraqis have to settle this themselves. This is not a "we" thing. This is a "them" thing. They got a government now, and they have to settle it. No matter how complicated it is, they have to sit down, figure out what--what needs to be done, and settle this civil war themselves. There'll be some fighting, but the--the al-Qaeda, the thing that we're worried about worldwide, the threat we're worried about in the United States will disappear, because the Iraqis do not like them. It's just that they put up with them because we have become occupiers, and we've united everybody against us.

SCHIEFFER: Congressman John Murtha, who says it's not a "we" thing but a "them" thing. We'll be back with--in a moment with a Republican view of all this.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And with us now Senator Richard Lugar. He is, of course, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Senator, thank you very much for coming. Two points of view this morning. General Peter Pace, the chairman of the Joints Chief said, in his words, things are going, quote, "very, very well in Iraq." And then you just heard Congressman John Murtha say, 'We're in the midst of a civil war. We need to get out of there.' Where do you come down?

Senator DICK LUGAR (Republican, Indiana; Foreign Relations Committee): Well, we are not certain yet whether it's civil war, but it could be. The question really is whether Iraqis want to be Iraqis, as opposed to Sunnis and Shiites and Kurds, and that hasn't been decided. We're on the cusp of the decision. When President Talabani was a Kurd and says that he doesn't like the idea of Mr. Jaafari, the current prime minister, of the Shiite continuing, that Kurds and Sunnis want to have somebody else in that role and they want to bring the parliament which after all was elected last December 15th into play, but you can't do that till you have the leadership in a Cabinet. This is a period of decision right immediately ahead of us.

If they don't make it, then the possibilities are that Sunnis will fight Shiites, Kurds will like to be left out of the whole picture altogether, but they're unlikely to escape, and the oil resources which ideally could be shared in the 18 provinces are not going to be shared. And so therefore, whether it's civil war, there's an internal conflict there that doesn't get you to Iraq. It gets you to sects that continue to fight that have been suppressed by kings, by Saddam, now have a chance really to make it on their own.

SCHIEFFER: But I take it you do not agree with General Pace, that things are going very, very well from what I just heard you say.

Sen. LUGAR: Well, General Pace is correct that there--the training has gone reasonably well, and that was shown in the suppression in the fighting that occurred in the last couple of weeks. Now some would say it's a different

success, some places did better than others, but nevertheless substantial...(unintelligible)...some in the Iraqi government managing to bring things under control. I think he's correct in the sense that, after all, there still is the hope for democracy, still a hope for a unified Iraq. That is important, because the absence of that we have to examine also. In other words, it's all well and good to suggest that the Iraqis want this or that. People are not thinking as Iraqis. They're thinking as sects, or as particular parts of Iraq, and, in that kind of a turmoil, we're back into the war against terror in a big way, with an incubator for difficulty.

SCHIEFFER: Well, do you think that the administration, and General Pace is part of that, is giving us the straight story on what's going on there, because it seems to me that they play down the bad news and have from the very beginning.

Sen. LUGAR: Well, it's certainly not emphasized. It--we've tried at least in a modest way in our office to send out nine letters. I've sent covers with some of the materials Congressman Murtha mentioned: the March 1 report which talks about oil. It talks about the problems of electricity not going on in lots of parts of the country, and the educational process, the commerce. These are serious issues that have to be a part of the discussion. The heart of the matter, obviously, for most Americans, is people being killed, people dying, Iraqis and Americans. How are we going to bring order? Is there a desire for order on the part of the parties involved, and if there is not, what then is our strategy if Iraqis decide they don't want to be Iraqis?

SCHIEFFER: Well, that just brings me to my next question: What should we be doing here? I mean, Congressman Murtha just said, "It's not a we problem, it's the them problem," that we, it seems to me, have to decide where we go from here. Do we keep committing troops to this? Do we bring them home? Do we put them out to the side? Wha--where should the United States be right now? What should we be doing?

Sen. LUGAR: President Talabani asked assurance from our military commanders this week that we would be with them during this critical period of time. The answer has to be yes. It can't be equivocal; otherwise, the thing really does fall apart. I think that's important. Talabani, the president of the country, and they're talking about putting their act together. Now the fact is that they may or may not be successful, but we better hope that they are because the consequences for our country in the war against terror are very fateful if they are not.

SCHIEFFER: So, what you're saying is that we can't--we can't draw down our troops at this time.

Sen. LUGAR: Not at this time, no.

SCHIEFFER: No--the president is getting ready to meet with his commanders and they've been talking about reducing the troop levels.

Sen. LUGAR: Yes.

SCHIEFFER: You think no longer can we think about that?

Sen. LUGAR: No, I think we will be thinking about that. And I would not be at all surprised that the president and the troop commanders discussed various phases of withdrawal, but is provided that this government comes into being, that the parliament meets, that the armed forces are able to suppress the dissidents. In other words, without our help. With us in the background. Those are the consequences at least of what we're looking at.

SCHIEFFER: But you don't think there are going to be any troop withdrawals in the immediate future.

Sen. LUGAR: Well, not in the next couple of weeks. I think it's been broadly discussed ever since some troops left, as I recall, after the December 15th election...

SCHIEFFER: Yeah.

Sen. LUGAR: ...that that was very possible and the rotations might not occur in quite the same frame.

SCHIEFFER: Well, Congressman Murtha just said that some Republicans tell him privately that he's really helping them because this war is very unpopular and if--if he does bring pressure and they do begin to draw down these troops, it'll help the Republicans in the--in the coming election. What's your sense of where Republicans are on this? Do they want troops out? Do they want to keep them there?

Sen. LUGAR: There is that.

SCHIEFFER: I'm not asking what you think or what's wise.

Sen. LUGAR: Yes, yes. General support in the Republican ranks for the president and for the troops as they stand, I would say very clearly everybody reads polls. They've not been going well for Republicans, the administration, for Congress. But I think, likewise, most people who are in that sort of a game would say in the event that Iraq actually does form a democracy, in the event our economy strengthens, for example, in the event several things happen. Then the politics are very fickle business. The polls then trickle up and people say that was statesmanship at that point.

SCHIEFFER: It sort of sounds like my golf game. If I can hit that next shot just right, then I'm suddenly a good player. But there's a lot of things that have to happen here.

Sen. LUGAR: There's very good similarities, yes.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you quickly about Iran. What should be doing--we should be doing on this and how serious is this situation?

Sen. LUGAR: We should be proceeding as we have been with the three European partners, but even in a more concentrated way in diplomacy with Russia and with China and with India. These are all players for different reasons. The Russians, because they offer a potential solution. They could do the centrifuge technology in Russia, and then the Iranians would not have to develop that. They could be the beneficiaries of nuclear energy. Much the same sort of issue and fact that the president is discussing with the Indians and his visits: the provision of nuclear materials so they can do peaceful work.

Now, at the same time, the Chinese and the Russians and the Indians have a strategic interest in the country. The Chinese and the Indians because they're negotiating large multi-billion dollar, multi-year deals for Iranian gas and oil. To the extent that there are alternatives, like nuclear energy, then perhaps they're not so intense with this.

And finally, some people in the United Nations, as we take a look at the Security Council will have to decide is it important that there not be further nuclear weapons in the Middle East given all the volatile situations we've already discussed in Iraq, but we could discuss in Lebanon and Jordan and the Israeli/Palestine problem, across the board.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you quickly about the ports deal. Do you think it's wise to go forward with that?

Sen. LUGAR: I think it's wise to have the 45 days of examination of two or three things. One of which is this procedure within the administration, not well known to Congress, not very well briefed, probably reasonably well done in this particular case. Likewise, the relationship with Dubai, and that's important to talk about. And finally, port security. This is what Americans are genuinely interested in. Do we have control of our ports and how does anybody owning the operations affect that?

SCHIEFFER: All right. Senator, thank you so much for being with us this morning.

Back with a final word in just a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally today, I am glad that Washington and the rest of the nation got to see those tapes of government video conferences which showed that government officials from the top down were warned that Hurricane Katrina held the potential for catastrophe, yet managed to do virtually nothing but watch it happen. But didn't we know that already? That the huge bureaucracy cobbled together after 9/11 was a monumental flop, that political hacks performed like political hacks?

Yes, it was a disgrace. But after two days in New Orleans this week, I am convinced we have to stop the tape and go live. The people of New Orleans I talked to feel abandoned by government at every level, and forgotten by the

rest of the country. But their worry is about now; what happens next? Are the levees really going to hold the next time? Will they ever collect on their flood insurance? Will they ever get their schools open again? Only 20 of more than 120 are open now.

As government bureaucracies and Congress wrangle over who's to blame for last time, there is still no real plan about what to do the next time. What we do know is that the next hurricane season is less than three months away. Sheriff Jack Stephens of nearby St. Bernard Parish, whose entire 140-person deputy force is now living in trailers, told me the other night, 'No one knows what will happen if we get another big one. We're hanging on by our fingernails.' Can't we stop the tape recorder just long enough to think about that?

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