

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER.). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator GRAHAM be allowed to engage in a colloquy with me and that we may take such time as we may consume.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IRAQ

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor this morning with great sorrow and great concern and an even deeper alarm about the events that are transpiring rapidly in Iraq.

ISIS, the most extreme Islamist organization, radical terrorist organization, now controls at least one-third of Iraqi territory. It is rapidly gaining more. The areas of Fallujah, Mosul, Tikrit, they are on the outsides of Samarra. With these victories, ISIS controls a swath of territory that stretches from the Syrian-Turkish frontier in the north, down to the Euphrates River, all of the way down to the Iraqi city of Fallujah, just 40 miles west of Baghdad. Of course, hourly they are experiencing greater gains while the Iraqi military and police seem to be dissolving before our very eyes.

ISIS social media published pictures of their fighters demolishing the sand berm which hitherto marked the border between Syria and Iraq, an interesting symbolic gesture. ISIS released footage of large numbers of weapons and armored military vehicles being received by members in eastern Syria, confirming fears that the looted weapons would fuel the insurgency on both sides, both Syria and Iraq.

Sources in the Syrian city of Hasaka confirmed that large numbers of trucks, convoys of trucks, carrying weapons, arrived late on Tuesday and were met by a senior ISIS figure Omar al-Chechani. General Keane, the architect of the surge said:

This organization [speaking of ISIS] has grown into a military organization that is no longer conducting terrorist activities exclusively but is conducting conventional military operations. They are attacking Iraqi military positions with company—and battalion—size formations. And in the face of that the Iraqi security forces have not been able to stand up to it.

The most frightening part is that ISIS's strength will only grow after today. It will use the cash reserves from Mosul's banks, the military equipment seized from military and police bases, and the release of 3,000 fighters from local jails to bolster its military and financial capacity.

ISIS has now become the richest terrorist group ever, even after looting \$429 million from Mosul's central bank. The governor confirmed Kurdish television reports that ISIS militants had stolen

millions from numerous banks across Mosul.

Most disturbing is as the Iraqi security forces are collapsing, Kurdish and Shia militias are, to some degree, filling the vacuum.

The story goes on and on, including the fact that the International Organization for Migration says that as many as 500,000 citizens have fled Mosul. There are reports of tens of thousands of citizens forced from their homes in other areas as fighting escalates across northern and central Iraq.

Then the question arises: Could all of this have been avoided? The answer is absolutely yes—absolutely yes.

I think it is probably the height of ego to quote one's self, but I think it is important to have again on the record what I said during this whole process when the only goal of the President of the United States was to leave Iraq and Afghanistan—and he is about to make the same mistake in Afghanistan that he did in Iraq.

Those of us who knew Iraq, who knew Al Qaeda, who knew how vital and how fragile the Iraqi Government is—the day the President announced that all U.S. troops would leave Iraq by the end of the year, I said on October 21, 2011:

Today marks a harmful and sad setback for the United States in the world. I respectfully disagree with the President: this decision will be viewed as a strategic victory for our enemies in the Middle East. . . . Nearly 4,500 Americans have given their lives for our mission in Iraq. Countless more have been wounded. I fear that all of the gains made possible by these brave Americans in Iraq at such grave cost are now at risk.

On November 15, 2011, in the Senate Armed Services Committee, when Ambassador Crocker said it was a mistake, I said—and I will not give the whole statement, but I said:

We cannot avoid the fact that Iraq's progress is now at greater risk than at any time since the dark days before the surge, and that it did not have to be this way.

Finally, on December 14, 2011, the day the President triumphed, visited Fort Bragg to mark the end—in his view, the end of the Iraq war—I said:

Over 4,000 brave young Americans gave their lives in this conflict. I pray that their sacrifice is not in vain. . . . Unfortunately, it is clear that this decision of a complete pull-out of United States troops from Iraq was dictated by politics, and not our national security interests. I believe that history will judge this President's leadership with the scorn and disdain it deserves.

Of course, we know the United States rebuffed, according to the New York Times today, in an article by Michael Gordon and Eric Schmitt, the United States refused Maliki's request to strike against the militants' strategic disaster, assisted by withdrawal from Iraq.

Iraq's terrorists are becoming a full-blown army.

One of the smartest guys I have encountered, a man named Dexter Filkins, has great experience. He has an article in the New Yorker, "In Extremists' Iraq Rise, America's Legacy."

When the Americans invaded, in March, 2003, they destroyed the Iraqi state.

He continues:

The negotiations between Obama and Maliki fell apart, in no small measure because of a lack of engagement by the White House. Today, many Iraqis, including some close to Maliki, say that a small force of American soldiers—working in non-combat roles—would have provided a crucial stabilizing factor that is now missing from Iraq. Sami al-Askari, a Maliki confidant, told me for my article this spring, "If you had a few hundred here, not even a few thousand, they would be cooperating with you, and they would become your partners." President Obama wanted the Americans to come home, and Maliki didn't particularly want them to stay.

The trouble is, as the events of this week show, what the Americans left behind was an Iraqi state that was not able to stand on its own. What we built is now coming apart. This is the real legacy of America's war in Iraq.

If I sound angry, it is because I am angry, because during this whole period of time, for example, the Washington Post, in an editorial this morning called "The Iraq success."

Denis McDonough, then deputy national security adviser and now White House chief of staff, told reporters in 2011 that Mr. Obama "said what we are looking for is an Iraq that's secure, stable and self-reliant, and that's exactly what we got here. So there's no question this is a success."

Sometime we are going to hold people responsible for their policies as well as their words. To declare that a conflict is over does not mean it necessarily is over.

There is a great piece by Daniel Henninger this morning in the Wall Street Journal entitled, "While Obama Fiddles."

Meanwhile, Iraq may be transforming into (a) a second Syria or (b) a restored caliphate. Past some point, the world's wildfires are going to consume the Obama legacy. And leave his successor a nightmare.

What needs to be done now? Every hour the options become fewer and fewer as ISIS, the most radical Islamist terrorist group alive, sweeps across Iraq and now, according to the latest reports, is even threatening Baghdad, that there are signs of further deterioration of the Iraqi military.

What do we need to do now?

Obviously, the first thing I think we need to do is call together the people who succeeded in Iraq, those who have been retired, and get together that group and place them in positions of responsibility so they can develop a policy to reverse this tide of radical Islamist extremism, which directly threatens the security of the United States of America, and it is time the President got a new national security team.

It is time he got a group of people together who know what it is to succeed in conflict. I would say the leader of that would be General Petraeus. I would say General Mattis is one. I would say General Keane is another one. I would say Bob Kagan is another one.

There is a group of people, along with myself and the Senator from South Carolina, who predicted every single one of these events because of an American lack of reliability and American weakness—and the President of the United States declaring that conflicts are at an end when they are not—an exit from Iraq and now an exit from Afghanistan without a strategy and without victory.

So drastic measures need to be taken. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is one who has gone along with this policy for a long time. We need a new Chairman. We need a new National Security Adviser. We need a new team. We need a new team that knows what America's national security interests are and are more interested in national security than they are in politics.

I come to this floor with great sadness because all of this could have been avoided. There is no inevitability about what is taking place in Iraq.

Iraq is a faraway place, but ask any intelligence leader in this country and that leader will tell you this poses—a takeover of Iraq in the Iraq-Syria area—which is now the largest concentration of Al Qaeda in history—is a direct threat to the United States of America.

Our Director of National Intelligence, General Clapper, has said in open testimony that this concentration of Al Qaeda-oriented and Al Qaeda-affiliated groups will be planning attacks on the United States of America.

The saddest part about all of this to me is the fact that 4,400 young Americans lost their lives, thousands lost their limbs. Thousands are scarred for life because of the experience they had serving in Iraq. They had it won. In the words of General Petraeus: We won the war and lost the peace.

That is a direct responsibility of the President of the United States, who is the Commander in Chief. But I grieve for those families who lost their loved ones, who fought so bravely, and made such sacrifices.

To see all of that, all of that success, where the surge succeeded, thanks to one of the finest generals in history, GEN David Petraeus, we see this all now torn asunder because of a policy of withdrawal without victory.

When those withdrawals and that policy were being orchestrated, the Senator from South Carolina, I, and others, stood and said: Please don't do this. Please leave a small force behind in Iraq. We are begging now, please leave a small force in Afghanistan.

The Afghans have no air capabilities. The Taliban will come back and all of the sacrifice in Afghanistan will be made in vain. So at least take immediate action to try to break the advance of ISIS across Iraq today but also revisit the decision to completely withdraw from Afghanistan because the Taliban is still alive and well.

Because the President of the United States declares a conflict is over does

not mean, in the eyes of the enemy, it is over. Conflicts end when the enemy is defeated. The Iraq war did not end because the forces within Iraq were still undefeated.

The conflict in Afghanistan will not be over 2 years from now in 2017, when the final American is scheduled to leave Afghanistan.

Please learn the lessons.

I say to the President of the United States: Get a new national security team in place. You have been ill-served by the national security team and the decisions that you have in place now and the decisions that you made, and have that new national security team come up with a strategy, a strategy to do whatever we can to prevent this direct threat to the national security of this Nation, the security of this Nation.

Of all the visits the former Senator from Connecticut, Joe Lieberman, LINDSEY GRAHAM, and I made every Fourth of July, two or three times a year, traveling the country, and having been in the company of not just great leaders such as General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker but the young men and women; the privates, the corporals, especially the sergeants—these brave men and women who were serving and who were willing to sacrifice on behalf of somebody else's freedom they believe they had won, the surge succeeded. Any military expert will tell us the surge succeeded. But it was won at great sacrifice.

Among other cities, the black flags of Al Qaeda fly over the city of Fallujah today. Ninety-six brave soldiers and marines were killed and 600 wounded. What do we tell their families? What do we tell their mothers?

So it is not too late. America is still the most powerful nation on earth. We still have the finest and strongest military ever. We have the finest young men and women who are serving in it ever.

It is not too late. But we have to have a dramatic reversal of course before the situation gets to the point where, as the Director of National Intelligence has stated, this will be an area where attacks on the United States of America will be orchestrated.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the referenced articles be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New Yorker, June 11, 2014]

IN EXTREMISTS' IRAQ RISE, AMERICA'S LEGACY
(By Dexter Filkins)

First Falluja, then Mosul, and now the oil-refinery town of Baiji. The rapid advance of Al Qaeda-inspired militants across the Sunni heartland of northern and western Iraq has been stunning and relentless—and utterly predictable. Here's a forecast: the bad news is just beginning.

The capture of Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, by Sunni extremists on Tuesday is the most dramatic example of the resurgence of the country's sectarian war, which began al-

most immediately after the withdrawal of the last American forces in December, 2011. The fighters who took Mosul are attached to an Al Qaeda spawn called the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, or ISIS, which is now poised to carve out a rump state across the Sunni-dominated lands that stretch from western Baghdad to the Syrian border and beyond.

As I detailed in a recent piece for the magazine, Iraq's collapse has been driven by three things. The first is the war in Syria, which has become, in its fourth bloody year, almost entirely sectarian, with the country's majority-Sunni opposition hijacked by extremists from groups like ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra, and by the more than seven thousand foreigners, many of them from the West, who have joined their ranks. The border between the two countries—three hundred miles long, most of it an empty stretch of desert—has been effectively erased, with ISIS and Nusra working both sides. As the moderates in Syria have been pushed aside, so too have their comrades in Iraq.

The second factor—probably the dominant one—is the policies of Nuri Al-Maliki, Iraq's Prime Minister. Maliki is a militant sectarian to the core, and he had been fighting on behalf of Iraq's long-suppressed Shiite majority for years before the Americans arrived, in 2003. Even after the Americans toppled Saddam, Maliki never stopped, taking a page—and aid and direction—from his ideological brethren across the border in Iran. When the Americans were on the ground in Iraq, they acted repeatedly to restrain Maliki, and the rest of Iraq's Shiite leadership, from its most sectarian impulses. At first, they failed, and the civil war began in earnest in 2006. It took three years and hundreds of lives, but the American military succeeded in tamping down Iraq's sectarian furies, not just with violence but also by forcing Maliki to accommodate Sunni demands. Time and again, American commanders have told me, they stepped in front of Maliki to stop him from acting brutally and arbitrarily toward Iraq's Sunni minority. Then the Americans left, removing the last restraints on Maliki's sectarian and authoritarian tendencies.

In the two and a half years since the Americans' departure, Maliki has centralized power within his own circle, cut the Sunnis out of political power, and unleashed a wave of arrests and repression. Maliki's march to authoritarian rule has fueled the reemergence of the Sunni insurgency directly. With nowhere else to go, Iraq's Sunnis are turning, once again, to the extremists to protect them.

Which brings us to the third reason. When the Americans invaded, in March, 2003, they destroyed the Iraqi state its military, its bureaucracy, its police force, and most everything else that might hold a country together. They spent the next nine years trying to build a state to replace the one they crushed. By 2011, by any reasonable measure, the Americans had made a lot of headway but were not finished with the job. For many months, the Obama and Maliki governments talked about keeping a residual force of American troops in Iraq, who would act largely to train Iraq's Army and to provide intelligence against Sunni insurgents. (They would almost certainly have been barred from fighting.) Those were important reasons to stay, but the most important went largely unstated: it was to continue to act as a restraint on Maliki's sectarian impulses, at least until the Iraqi political system was strong enough to contain him on its own. The negotiations between Obama and Maliki fell apart, in no small measure because of a lack of engagement by the White House. Today, many Iraqis, including some close to

Maliki, say that a small force of American soldiers working in non-combat roles—would have provided a crucial stabilizing factor that is now missing from Iraq. Sami al-Askari, a Maliki confidant, told me for my article this spring, “If you had a few hundred here, not even a few thousand, they would be cooperating with you, and they would become your partners.” President Obama wanted the Americans to come home, and Maliki didn’t particularly want them to stay.

The trouble is, as the events of this week show, what the Americans left behind was an Iraqi state that was not able to stand on its own. What we built is now coming apart. This is the real legacy of America’s war in Iraq.

[From the Washington Post]

THE IRAQ ‘SUCCESS’

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION NEEDS A STRATEGY AS DANGERS MOUNT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

For years, President Obama has been claiming credit for “ending wars,” when, in fact, he was pulling the United States out of wars that were far from over. Now the pretense is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain.

On Monday, a loathsome offshoot of al-Qaeda, the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, captured Mosul, one of Iraq’s most important cities, seizing large caches of modern weaponry and sending half a million civilians fleeing in terror. ISIS, which can make the original al-Qaeda look moderate, controls large swaths of territory stretching from northern Syria into Iraq. On Tuesday, militants advanced toward Baghdad, capturing Tikrit and other cities.

If Iraq joins Syria in full-fledged civil war, the danger to U.S. allies in Israel, Turkey, Jordan and the Kurdish region of Iraq is immense. These terrorist safe havens also pose a direct threat to the United States, according to U.S. officials. “We know individuals from the U.S., Canada and Europe are traveling to Syria to fight in the conflict,” Jeh Johnson, secretary of homeland security, said earlier this year. “At the same time, extremists are actively trying to recruit Westerners, indoctrinate them, and see them return to their home countries with an extremist mission.”

When Mr. Obama defended his foreign policy in a speech at West Point two weeks ago, he triggered some interesting debate about the relative merits of engagement and restraint. But the question of whether Mr. Obama more closely resembles Dwight D. Eisenhower or Jimmy Carter is less relevant than the results of his policy, which are increasingly worrisome.

In Syria, where for three years Mr. Obama has assiduously avoided meaningful engagement, civil war has given rise to “the most catastrophic humanitarian crisis any of us have seen in a generation.” Mr. Obama’s United Nations ambassador Samantha Power said in February.

In Libya, Mr. Obama joined in a bombing campaign to topple dictator Moammar Gaddafi and then declined to provide security assistance to help the nation right itself. It, too, is on the verge of civil war.

In Iraq, Mr. Obama chose not to leave a residual force that might have helped keep the nation’s politics on track, even as the White House insisted there was no reason to worry. Denis McDonough, then deputy national security adviser and now White House chief of staff, told reporters in 2011 that Mr. Obama “said what we’re looking for is an Iraq that’s secure, stable and self-reliant, and that’s exactly what we got here. So there’s no question this is a success.”

Now Mr. Obama is applying the same recipe to Afghanistan: total withdrawal of U.S. troops by 2016, regardless of conditions.

At West Point, the president stressed that “not every problem has a military solution.” That is obviously true. In fact, a goal of U.S. policy should be to help shape events so that military solutions do not have to be considered. The presence of U.S. troops in South Korea, for example, has helped keep the peace for more than a half century.

Total withdrawal can instead lead to challenges like that posed by Iraq today, where every option—from staying aloof to more actively helping Iraqi forces—carries risks. The administration needs to accept the reality of the mounting danger in the Middle East and craft a strategy that goes beyond the slogan of “ending war responsibly.”

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for 10 minutes to 15 minutes, as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We have an order to go to executive session at 11:30.

Mr. GRAHAM. I ask unanimous consent to speak until 11:30.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. GRAHAM. Senator McCAIN was on the floor, and I am sorry I missed him. I was in a briefing.

To the American people, the situation in Iraq is dire. Syria has become a launching pad for attacks against the Iraqi people.

The ISIS—we don’t know who these people are, but we are going to get to know them—are Islamic jihadists based in Syria and Iraq. They are an army, and they are not a bunch of hoodlums.

They have a very specific game plan. They want to create an Islamic caliphate and basically dominate Iraq and Syria. Some want to go to Lebanon and want to create an Islamic state that will be ruled under the most extreme version of Islamic law one could imagine—hell on earth for women, not good for us, the end of modern thought in that part of the world. The people of Iraq and Syria are not by their nature radical Islamists. The people who are beginning to win the day on the battlefield come from all over, and they truly are radical Islamists who would put the world in darkness if they could.

The next 9/11 is in the making as I speak. These people are using Syria and now Iraq as a training ground for international jihad. There are European jihadists and American jihadists over in the Syria as I speak. Over 2 weeks ago, the largest truck bomb explosion by a suicide bomber in Syria was by an American citizen. And, I hate to say it, but there are more over there today.

The question for the United States is: Does it really matter if the ISIS dominates Syria and Iraq or any part thereof? I think it does. I think it is a very bad scenario for us. I think it directly impacts our security here at home, and it will throw the region into chaos.

It is clear to me, after the briefing, there is no scenario by which the Iraqi Security Forces can stop the advancement of this group toward Baghdad. I don’t think they go much beyond Baghdad, because then they get into the Shia areas of Iraq. That would be one hell of a fight. But Mosul has fallen, Tikrit has fallen, Fallujah has fallen. Now they are marching to Baghdad. Unless something changes, they will be successful.

They are sending the military equipment they are seizing into Syria to help their cause there. This is a very dangerous situation.

I urge President Obama to go on national television, explain what is going on in Iraq and Syria, and make the case to the American people why we should stay out or why we should do something.

I think American air power is the only hope to change the battlefield equation in Iraq. I know no American wants to set boots on the ground, and I don’t feel that is a solution worthy of consideration at this point. But I have been told by our military commanders the Iraqi army is in shambles, and without some kind of intervention, Baghdad is definitely in jeopardy, most of the Sunni areas of Iraq will be run by ISIS, and they will join forces with their colleagues over in Syria.

I worry about the King of Jordan. I worry about Lebanon being next. God knows, if we lose the King of Jordan, the last moderate force in the Middle East surrounding Israel, what a calamity that would be.

I end with this thought. I remember discussing Iraq with President Bush as if it was yesterday. I went over on numerous occasions with Senator McCAIN early on after the fall of Baghdad and every trip it was worse.

I remember the Bush administration telling us: These are just a few dead-enders. Everything is fine. The media is hyping all the problems because they don’t like President Bush.

The soldiers on the ground were telling us: I am driving around every day. I don’t know why I am driving around, but I am getting my ass shot off—pardon my French here—without purpose.

I remember sitting down with President Bush, his administration and his team, and Senator McCAIN, and we candidly told President Bush: If you don’t adjust your strategy, if you don’t reinforce Iraq, we are going to lose.

To his credit, he did, and the surge actually worked. We left Iraq in a very good spot. The security forces had won the day. We had driven out Al Qaeda. Politics was beginning to take over. Violence had been reduced tremendously. The surge worked. Our military did their job, fighting alongside their Iraqi counterparts.