

Senate Dems, GOP Throw Down Gauntlet to Rice

Probably not since Vietnam has an Administration been as isolated as the Bush-Cheney Administration is today, judging by the responses of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Jan. 11 to an appearance by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who had come to defend President Bush's "surge" plan.

"Today marks the bipartisan end of the rubber-stamp Senate," said Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.). And indeed, there was very strong convergence between the questioning of Rice by Democratic or Republican Senators.

Especially significant was the open recognition that the Administration intends to escalate not only within Iraq, but to extend the war throughout the region—particularly into Iran and Syria. Even more important, was the fact that committee chair Joseph Biden (D-Del.) and Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) explicitly warned the Administration that it does not have the authority to attack Iran, with Biden declaring that any move against Iran will trigger a "constitutional confrontation."

Leading off for the Republicans, Ranking Member Richard Lugar (Ind.) outlined his view of broadened regional diplomacy and a regional dialogue, which Cheney-Bush adamantly oppose. Lugar also sharply questioned Rice about a David Brooks column, which reported that the Maliki Plan is to have U.S. troops on the periphery of Baghdad to fight the Sunnis, while Shi'ites and Kurds take charge of (i.e., ethnically cleanse) Baghdad itself.

"This is an escalation," charged Hagel, "and I don't agree with that escalation." The Senator asked Rice if we will cross the border into Syria and Iran; when she evaded, Hagel said, "no one in our government can sit here today and tell Americans that we won't engage the Iranians and the Syrians cross-border." Hagel reminded Rice: "Some of us remember 1970 . . . when our government lied to the American people and said we didn't cross the border going into Cambodia. In fact we did."

"The President's speech represents the most dangerous foreign policy blunder since Vietnam, if it's carried out," Hagel declared, "and I will resist it."

Another Republican, Sen. George Voinovich of Ohio, expressed his skepticism both with respect to the "surge," and with regard to Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki. "I've gone along with the President on this, and I bought into his dream," Voinovich concluded, "and at this stage of the game, I don't think it's going to happen."

Among Democrats, the opposition was unanimous, in-

cluding among early supporters of the war, such as Bill Nelson (Fla), who told Rice: "I supported you in this war, but I can't support it any longer. . . . I have not been told the truth, over and over again."

The toughest questioning of Rice came from Senator Boxer, who told her, "You are not listening to the American people, or the military, or the ISG [Iraq Study Group]; then you wonder why there is this dark cloud of skepticism and pessimism over the war." Boxer displayed a blow-up of a quote from Rice in 2005 about how "I have no doubt" that the Iraqis would be soon able to take over the effort, and U.S. could begin to withdraw. Then Boxer confronted Rice over "who pays the price?"—"not me, not you," but the troops and their families, which she illustrated with dramatic quotes from interviews with families who had lost loved ones. Boxer then demanded to know from Rice if she knew—or if anyone knew—how many casualties will result from this "surge." When Rice could not answer, Boxer pronounced it "really appalling."

Chairman Biden, at the end of the hearing, told Rice that she should convey to the President, that what occurred there was "fairly profound . . . that you heard 21 members—with one or two notable exceptions—expressing outright hostility, disagreement, or overwhelming concern, with the President's proposal."

The Iran Issue

The fact that Cheney and Bush are moving ahead for war against Iran was a clear concern for many of the Senators. Biden told Rice that the 2002 authorization for the use of force in Iraq, "explicitly denies you the authority to go into Iran." He said a move on Iran "will generate a constitutional confrontation here in the Senate," and if not, Biden promised, "I will make it a constitutional confrontation."

Just before this, freshman Sen. James Webb (D-Va.) had asked Rice if the Administration believes that the Authorization to Use Military Force for Iraq, authorizes the Administration to take action against Iran, or if any action against Iran would require Congressional approval. When Rice demurred, Webb demanded that Rice give him a written answer. Webb also attacked the Administration's doctrine of pre-emptive war, and said that President Bush ought to get on a plane and go to Tehran, the same way Nixon went to China.

There is concern on the House side as well. "President Bush appears to be setting the stage for a wider war in the region," Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) said after the President's speech. "He has blamed Iran for attacks on America. The President is vowing to disrupt Iran. He is going to add an aircraft carrier to the shores off the coast of Iran. He has promised to give Patriot missiles to 'our friends and allies.' Isn't one war enough for this President? It is time the media and the Congress began to pay attention to this President when he talks aggressively about Iran and Syria."

Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) is gathering signatures for a

resolution identical to a prior resolution he authored, H.R. 391, which requires the President to seek Congressional approval before initiating military action against Iran. The resolution firmly concludes that Congressional approval of any military action is “not discretionary, but a legal and constitutional requirement.”

Documentation

Kennedy Bill To Reassert Congress’s Power Over War

In a speech to at the National Press Club in Washington Jan. 9, Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) announced that he was introducing a bill requiring the Congress to vote before the President escalates troops levels in Iraq, and to reassert Congressional authority over the Iraq War, as required by Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution. We reprint a summary of the legislation as it appears on Senator Kennedy’s website.

The legislation claims the people’s right to a full voice in the President’s plan to send more troops into the Iraq civil war. It says that no funds can be spent to send additional troops to Iraq unless Congress approves the President’s proposed escalation of American forces.

The Iraq War Resolution of 2002 authorized a war against the regime of Saddam Hussein because he was believed to have weapons of mass destruction and an operational relationship with al-Qaeda, and was in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions.

The mission of our armed forces today in Iraq no longer bears any resemblance to the mission authorized by Congress.

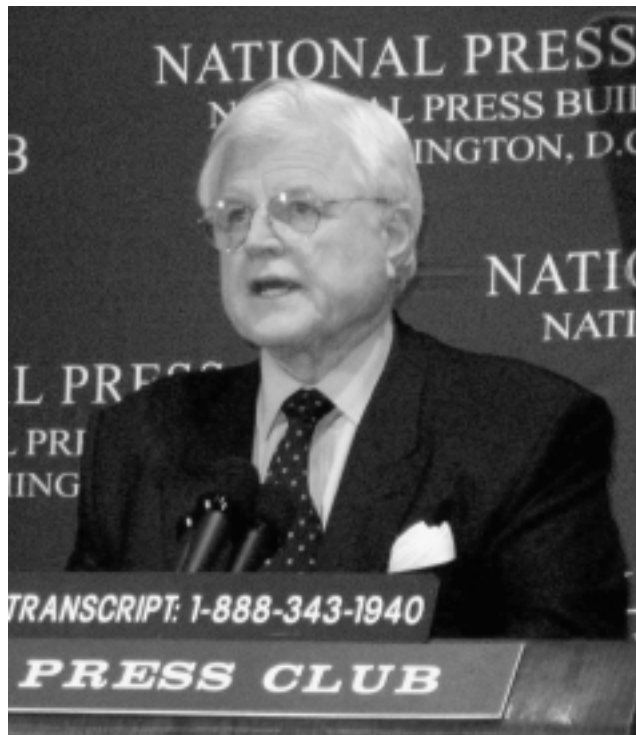
Iraq has descended into civil war, and sectarian violence continues to escalate.

On March 5, 2006, General Nash said, “We’re in a civil war now; it’s just that not everybody’s joined in.”

On Dec. 3, 2006, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said, “When we had the strife in Lebanon and other places, we called that a civil war—this is much worse.”

On Dec. 17, 2006, former Secretary of State Colin Powell said, “I am not persuaded that another surge of troops into Baghdad for the purposes of suppressing the communitarian violence, this civil war, will work.”

Iraq needs a political solution, not a military solution. The open-ended commitment of our military forces continues to enable the Iraqis to avoid taking responsibility for their own future. Tens of thousands of additional U.S. troops will only make the Iraqis more dependent on America, not less.



EIRNS/William Jones

Sen. Ted Kennedy speaks at the National Press Club on Jan. 9. His proposed legislation states that the President should not be permitted to increase U.S. troops in Iraq “without a specific new authorization from Congress.”

On Nov. 15, 2006, General Abizaid was unequivocal in stating that increasing our troop commitment is not the answer. He said, “I’ve met with every divisional commander. General Casey, the corps commander, General Dempsey—we all talked together, and I said, “in your professional opinion, if we were to bring in more American troops now, does it add considerably to our ability to achieve success in Iraq? And they all said no.”

On Dec. 29, 2006, General Casey said, “The longer we in the U.S. [armed] forces continue to bear the main burden of Iraq’s security, it lengthens the time that the government of Iraq has to take the hard decisions about reconciliation and dealing with the militias. . . . They can continue to blame us for all of Iraq’s problems, which are at base their problems.”

More than 3,000 American soldiers have died in Iraq, and more than 22,000 have been wounded. America cannot wait for the next President to resolve the problems in Iraq. A military escalation in Iraq would not strengthen our national security.

President Bush should not be permitted to increase the number of United States troops in harm’s way in the civil war without a specific new authorization from Congress.

The legislation requires a vote before funds are spent to deploy more troops and escalate our military presence. It does not cut off funding for our troops already in Iraq.