

Republican Rhetoric on Iraq: It's All About September

Today, the Bush Administration yet again called for more time in Iraq. But Republicans in Congress and the Bush Administration have repeatedly said that there would be a full assessment of Iraq policy in September. Now, with reports showing that violence in Iraq remains high and that a political solution remains out of reach, the Administration wants more time for a failed strategy. Now that September is here, it's time for Republicans to live up to their own rhetoric and work with Democrats to force a change of course in Iraq.

THE REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP SAID THEY WERE WAITING FOR SEPTEMBER TO ASSESS THE ESCALATION AND FIND A NEW COURSE IN IRAQ

Senator McConnell Said He Expected a New Direction in Iraq in the Fall. “I think that the handwriting is on the wall that we are going in a different direction in the fall, and I expect the president to lead it,’ McConnell said. ‘In other words, I think he, himself, has certainly indicated he's not happy with where we are. And I think we are looking for a new direction in the fall.’” [Associated Press, [5/25/07](#)]

Senator McConnell Called September a Key Month for Him and the Vast Majority of Republicans. “Well, I don't want to be repetitious but September is the month that we're looking at. There are may be various generals or various politicians or others who want to mention some other key time, but I think the key time for the vast majority of my members is September. And it certainly is for me.” [Senator Mitch McConnell Press Conference, [7/20/07](#)]

- **Senator McConnell Said He Was Looking to September to Determine the Course in Iraq.** At the same press conference, McConnell said, “Well, I think you can take what I said as for me, and I believe, I'm confident in saying, for most of the members of my conference, September's the month we're looking to, and it's the Petraeus-Crocker report.” [Senator Mitch McConnell Press Conference, [7/20/07](#)]

Senator McConnell Said He Was Awaiting a New Approach in September. “I think everybody anticipates that there's going to be a new strategy in the fall. I don't think we'll have the same level of troops, in all likelihood, that we have now. The Iraqis will have to step up, not only on the political side, but on the military side, to a greater extent. We're not there forever. I think they understand that, and the time to properly evaluate that, it strikes me, is in September.” [CBS, [6/17/07](#)]

- **Senator McConnell Said September Was the Time for Decisions on Iraq.** BLITZER: “So let me just be precise, Senator. You're saying mid- September, that's when major decisions have to be made about perhaps changing course?” MCCONNELL: “Sure. I think the president himself has suggested that. We're all looking to September. And I think most members of, at least of my party in the Senate, are willing to wait until then to make some definitive judgment.” [CNN, [7/22/07](#)]

Senator Lott Said There Must Be Significant Changes on the Ground in the Fall. “I do think this fall we have to see some significant changes on the ground, in Baghdad and other surrounding areas,” Lott told reporters. [CBS News, [5/8/07](#)]

Leader Boehner Said If Escalation Is Not Working By September or October, Republicans Will Want a Plan B. “By the time we get to September, October, members are going to want to know how well this is working, and if it isn't, what's Plan B.” [Fox News Sunday, [5/6/07](#)]

REPUBLICAN SENATORS SAID THEY WERE WAITING FOR SEPTEMBER FOR A NEW STRATEGY IN IRAQ

Senator Warner Argued for No Changes to the Iraq Policy Until September. “If we were to take tomorrow, for example and begin to change the intentions of the Senate, which were expressed in law 49 days ago, and suddenly announce a withdrawal program, as the distinguished Senator from Michigan has in his amendment, it would be perceived as an undercut to the very military operation we are trying to bring about now. Why can't we wait until September, until the President has had the benefit of all the convergence of this information, and then, as a body, review his remarks and statements and possibly change the strategy subsequent to the 15th of September?” [Congressional Record, 7/17/07]

Senator Coleman Expects New Strategy After September. “Sen. Coleman said he was confident that the administration would adopt a new strategy after September. ‘We're going to have a changed mission in Iraq,’ he said. ‘And we're going to have it by sometime next year. In fact, I anticipate that we are going to have significant troop withdrawals or drawdowns because we're not going to be doing what we were doing before.’” [Los Angeles Times, 7/13/07]

Senator Specter Said Congress Would Weigh Future Course of War in Iraq in September. “We have had very forceful statements from very prominent Republican supporters of the President that if there is not real progress, significant progress by September, that the funding will not be continued. I have said that if we don't have, the metaphor, a light at the end of the tunnel by September, that the funding is in serious question. But those are not matters which we're going to decide in July. Those are matters which we will decide in September after we have the report by General Petraeus and after we have the President's report, we will make a judgment as to what we will do in September.” [Congressional Record, 7/18/07]

PRESIDENT BUSH AND ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS SAID THEY WOULD ASSESS THEIR STRATEGY IN SEPTEMBER

President Bush Had Hoped to See Improvement in Iraq by September. “This September, as Congress has required, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will return to Washington to provide a more comprehensive assessment. By that time, we hope to see further improvement in the positive areas, the beginning of improvement in the negative areas.” [White House Press Conference, [7/12/07](#)]

President Bush Said Comprehensive Assessment on Iraq Was Set for September. “This week, my Administration submitted to Congress an interim report on the situation in Iraq. This report provides an initial assessment of how the Iraqi government is doing in meeting the 18 benchmarks that Congress asked us to measure. This is a preliminary report. In September, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will return to Washington to provide a more comprehensive assessment. ... Some people say the surge has been going for six months and that is long enough to conclude that it has failed. In fact, the final reinforcements arrived in Iraq just a month ago -- and only then was General Petraeus able to launch the surge in full force. He and the troops who have begun these dangerous operations deserve the time and resources to carry them out.” [President's Radio Address, [7/14/07](#)]

National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley Called September ‘Important Time.’ “...[I]t is important for us, of course, to return to the subject again in September, which is really, if you look at the legislation, what the Congress asked us to do. July 15 was always to be an interim snapshot. What the Congress provided in the legislation was in September a series of reports, both from the government and from people outside, and of

course General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker coming back, reporting to the President, reporting to the Congress. And that's, obviously, going to be an important time.” [NPR, [7/13/07](#)]

- **Hadley Downplayed July Report, Focused on September.** “So what Congress has mandated is really a process in September. The President signed that legislation; thinks it's the right process. And as he made very clear yesterday, that really is the way forward, in terms of considering where we go on Iraq.” [NPR, [7/13/07](#)]
- **Hadley Said Debate Was Structured Around September.** “I think that we are at a position where we will get to September, because I think as people have thought about it, and you say to them, look at your own legislation, look at the orderly process we agreed upon, look at the fact that the reinforcements are now just complete, and that in many ways we're now really seeing the application of the strategy in practice ... [W]aiting to September is the right way to go ... The process I've described is that September is a way to structure that debate with the men and women in uniform and the folks in the field with the Congress and with the American people.” [NPR, [7/13/07](#)]

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice Said September Report Would Shape the Way Forward in Iraq. “The President will get this report and then we will be able to chart a coherent way forward. But I think that there are many very good elements here.” [Fox News, [8/5/07](#)]

- **Secretary Rice Pleaded With Senator Snowe to Wait Until September to Break With the President on Iraq.** “Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was on the phone, pleading for more time. It was Tuesday morning, and Sen. Olympia J. Snowe was closer than she ever had been to breaking with President Bush over the Iraq war ... Rice argued that U.S. troops were having successes and pleaded for Snowe to wait at least until September, when Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, would deliver a full report on the political and military conditions there.” [Washington Post, [7/15/07](#)]

Secretary Gates Said We Had to Wait Until September to Assess Progress. “I think we'll have to see in September where we are in terms of what they've actually accomplished, what's happened in this ground-up kind of political progress.” [Pentagon Press Conference, [7/13/07](#)]

- **Secretary Gates Expected to Be Able to Evaluate the Escalation by Late Summer.** “What I said in February was that we would know by early summer whether the Iraqis were fulfilling their part of the bargain on the security side ... I said, we will know those things by early summer, and we did. And with reference to the surge and the fall, I have said early on that I didn't think we would be in a position to evaluate whether the surge was working until late summer. And I think I've said that pretty consistently. I think that's where we are with September. I don't think there's really any inconsistency there at all. [Pentagon Press Conference, [7/13/07](#)]

GENERAL PACE SAID DECISIONS ON IRAQ SHOULD BE MADE AFTER SEPTEMBER REPORT

Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Peter Pace Awaits Sept. Report. “So as we look at the progress to date, as we see where we are in September, we'll -- that'll be part of the overall analysis that he'll come in with, it'll be part of the analysis that Admiral Fallon will come in with, it'll be part of the analysis that the chiefs and I will recommend to the secretary, and all of that will become part of a dialogue as far as where are we in September, what's working and needs to be reinforced, what's not and needs to be changed.” [Pentagon Press Conference, [7/13/07](#)]

- **Gen. Pace Said Decisions on Troop Levels Would Be Made After September Report.** “The military must ‘be prepared for whatever it’s going to look like two months from now,’ Pace said in an interview with two reporters traveling with him to Iraq from Washington. ‘That way, if we need to plus up or come down’ in numbers of troops in Iraq, the details will have been studied, he said.” [Associated Press, 7/17/07]