

Hagel: We Need a Regional Security Conference

Speaking with anchor Bob Schieffer on CBS's "Face the Nation" on Aug. 6, Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Ne.) put forward a rational perspective on the conflict in Southwest Asia:

This is a regional issue. It is evolving into a global issue. We have got to keep working it. And until we have that cease-fire that stops all of this, we can't move toward moving to a high ground here of moving a process to get us to a resolution, which we all support and we all know what it is, a two-state resolution. . . .

So you cannot separate what's going on in Lebanon and Israel, from Iraq or anywhere else. This is going to have to include Iran, Syria. That means engagement. That means direct talks, and put all of it on the table. But we have to stop the slaughter. That's the first thing we have to do. . . .

We can find a way out of this. But it's going to take a lot different approach than what we have seen. Last point I'd make: Diplomacy and engagement and talking to adversaries is not and cannot be seen as a reward. It's part of the diplomatic process. . . .

And I think where we go from here, with all the prob-

lems and inconsistencies, is a cold, hard assessment that Iraq is not going to turn out the way that we were promised it was. And that's a fact, not because I say it. That's where it's going, just as the general said it very honestly, I think, this week, before the Congress.

What you do, I think—because we don't have many options. There are no good options here, no good options. I would move toward a higher ground, toward right back to what you talked about, Bob, the regionalization.

I would get the first President Bush, President Clinton, involved and try to impanel a regional security conference, a regional diplomatic conference. The UN can be part of that.

Unless you come at it that way, we're going to be leaving Iraq. And it's not going to be the way we intended to leave Iraq, because that is the direction this is going.

It is very wrong, Bob, to put American troops in a hopeless, winless situation, just keep feeding them in to what's going on. That's irresponsible and that is wrong. . . .

We are decimating our army. We can't continue with the tempo and the commitment that we are on right now. You go talk to any sergeant major, sergeant first class that's been around a little bit, or any general quietly, and they'll tell you.

I get the calls. Chris [Sen. Chris Dodd (D-Conn.), also on the show—ed.] gets the calls. So let's not pretend that things are a certain way. They are where they are. We have got to understand that, and deal with the facts as they are.

After the committee hearing Senator Clinton called upon Rumsfeld to resign: "I just don't understand why we can't get new leadership that would give us a fighting chance to turn the situation around before it's too late. I think the President should choose to accept Secretary Rumsfeld's resignation. The secretary has lost credibility with the Congress and with the people. It's time for him to step down and be replaced by someone who can develop an effective strategy and communicate it effectively to the American people and to the world. I am frankly tired of hearing the same stories from the Administration's national security team. The President changed his economic team, he changed his White House team, I think it's time for him to change his security and defense team."

On the Republican side, both Senators John McCain (Ariz.) and Susan Collins (Me.) joined Warner in making clear their lack of confidence in the strategy and tactics being employed by the Bush Administration, and also their concern about the cost of the war. Senator McCain, who is opposed to a withdrawal of troops, expressed concern about the redeployment of troops from Ramadi/Fallujah to Baghdad, saying: "What I worry about is, we're playing a game of whack-a-mole here. It flares up. We move troops there."

McCain also told Rumsfeld in no uncertain terms that the

Senate was now going to exercise oversight over the management of funds: "Secretary Rumsfeld, we passed an amendment on the armed services authorization bill, which I am confident will be accepted in conference. And that requires that operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, funding for it, be included in the regular budgetary process. . . . I hope you are making plans to include the expenses involved in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in the normal budgetary process and not as a, quote, 'emergency supplemental.'"

Senator Collins challenged the entire strategy of the Bush Administration: "If the upswing in violence has occurred despite the presence of the best troops in the world, it doesn't give me a lot of confidence in our underlying strategy." She then concluded: "I'm just trying to get a sense, Mr. Chairman, of whether we can expect indefinitely approximately \$2 billion a week from our budget to be spent on this war."

But now that the reality of what LaRouche has warned is the threat of generalized asymmetric warfare has been admitted, the question is whether the Congress will continue to stand impotently by, or take the necessary action. This is a war which is unwinnable militarily. Only *political* solutions which provide answers to the causes which underlie the asymmetric warfare are capable of preventing World War III.