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CBS "Face the Nation" Host: Bob Schieffer Guest: Senator John McCain (R-AZ)

Face the Nation
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Senator McCain, as we went to break there you said you applauded the president for his steadfastness, I think you said in contrast to some of the things that are coming out of the Pentagon.

What did you mean by that?

SEN. MCCAIN: A few weeks ago there was -- unnamed sources in the Pentagon said we were going to start withdrawals, and it was going to be phased out, et cetera, and I was very happy to see the president immediately saying, we're in a war, we're going to see it through to the , and we're going to do whatever it necessary. That's what I was talking about.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Do you think the Pentagon has given up on this? Have they decided this is something that can't be won or what?

SEN. MCCAIN: No, I believe our military are committed to victory. Look, one of the reasons why I'm optimistic is these men and women who are serving in Iraq are phenomenal. Our retention in Iraq is the highest. They're doing magnificent work, and they're committed to the belief that they need to do whatever is necessary, including sacrifice, to bring democracy and freedom to the Iraqi people.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Do you feel that the civilian officials in the Pentagon share that feeling?

SEN. MCCAIN: I don't know what their feelings are. I just know that there was information that came out of the Pentagon a few weeks ago saying they were planning on withdrawals. That's not the right message. The message is that we're going to withdraw after the situation is stabilized, and the Iraqi military can handle their own security requirements.

MR. DUFFY: Senator, the \$500 billion defense operations bill has basically been postponed, it's disappeared, pretty much because you want to force the Army and other military services to pay by the rules at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib with respect to prisoner treatment. The White House says that you're trying to tie their hands, and make it difficult for them to conduct foreign policy by forcing them to stick to the rules. Who is right here? Do they have a point about you getting your hands too into the details of how they handle prisoners?

SEN. MCCAIN: First of all, obviously one of the greatest setbacks that we've experienced was the Abu Ghraib scandal. I want to do whatever is necessary to make sure that the men and women who are actually handling the interrogation have a clear set of rules as to how those should be conducted, so we'll never again have another Abu Ghraib. There are many who believe that Congress needs to act in this way, and it's appropriate for us to do so, and I hope we can do that.

I don't know why the leadership of the Senate yanked the defense authorization bill, it's vital. This is the authorization for our men and women in the military to be trained, equipped, there's pay raises in it, there's bonuses, it's care for our National Guard and Reserves. It's inexplicable that we would not continue and finish this Defense authorization bill immediately upon our return so that we can take care of the men and women in the military and our national security needs.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Senator, you met with the vice president about this amendment you want to put on the bill, which basically says we will not torture prisoners that we take. Why did the vice president tell you he was against that?

SEN. MCCAIN: Well, I don't usually talk about my private conversations, but I think it's well known that the president feels that -- the vice president feels that it's not necessary for Congress to be involved and somehow this would be harmful. I don't understand that, I don't get it. We are signatories to a number of international agreements prohibiting torture, and we have used this Army training manual, field manual, for many wars, so that everybody knows exactly what can be done to prisoners and what can't.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Senator, I want to thank you very much for being with us this morning. We'll be back with a final word in just a minute.