

Transcript:

CNN - Crossfire

11/03/03

NOVAK: In Alabama today, President Bush told a crowd that the enemy in Iraq believes that America will run. That's why they're willing to kill innocent civilians, relief workers, and coalition troops. The president added, "America will never run." I might add, unless, of course, Dennis Kucinich wins the White House.

In the CROSSFIRE to debate how the war is going, Congresswoman Jan **Schakowsky** Democrat of Illinois. She joins us from Chicago. And Congressman Mike Pence, Republican of Indiana.

(APPLAUSE)

BEGALA: Congresswoman **Schakowsky**, Congressman Pence, thank you both for joining us.

(CROSSTALK)

BEGALA: First, let me say, I absolutely agree with our president when he says America will never run. I certainly hope he's right. And I believe that he's right.

REP. MIKE PENCE (R), INDIANA: You bet.

BEGALA: But I heard our secretary of defense on "This Week" with George Stephanopoulos asked about this. Let me just play what he said and ask for a comment. Here's Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, "THIS WEEK") DONALD RUMSFELD, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: In a long hard war, we're going to have tragic days, as this is. But they're necessary. They're part of a war that's difficult and complicated.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BEGALA: Now, that's an attitude that does make some Americans think we ought to just get the heck out. It bespeaks arrogance. To say that it's necessary, when we lost no troops occupying Germany, Japan, or Kosovo? Clearly, we have a flawed plan and we have a secretary of defense and an administration that is too arrogant to change it, don't we, Congressman?

PENCE: Well, I think -- actually, I disagree with that strongly, Paul.

I think what you see in the words of the secretary of defense, and what Jan and I, frankly, have heard on Capitol Hill literally since the inception of Operation Iraqi Freedom, is candor. It is refreshing candor, that we are in a part of the world that, in the words of the secretary in that now famed memo, is going to be a long, hard slog.

But I think the choice here is clear, Paul, whether we're going to stay and we're going to deliver freedom and stability to the people of Iraq, or whether we're going to do what we did 20 years go under, sadly, a Republican administration. And that is, we're going to be hit like we were in Beirut. We're going to pull out and we're going to leave a generation of mess and a beehive for terrorism behind.

(CROSSTALK)

BEGALA: ... necessary? Again, when we had successful occupations in Germany, in Japan, and in Kosovo, why does our secretary just throw up his hands and say, it's just necessary that a whole lot of our young men and women have to die? I don't agree. Why doesn't he get a smarter, better plan, more troops, different troops, more allies, do something different to save these young men's lives?

(APPLAUSE)

PENCE: And I'll tell you, as a member of Congress that's had to pick up the phone and call some parents in Hagerstown, Indiana, with that news, I can tell you that my heart longs for the day that we will be able to leave this country behind with peace and freedom and security and stability.

But the reality is that our enemies are hoping precisely, Paul, that we'll have the attitude that, frankly, you're reflecting and giving voice today, that we will

(CROSSTALK)

BEGALA: That we need to win? That's my attitude.

(CROSSTALK) PENCE: That will we see 16 Americans lost and that we'll cut and run. Unacceptable. We must not fail.

NOVAK: Congresswoman **Schakowsky**.

SEN. JAN **SCHAKOWSKY** (D), ILLINOIS: Yes.

NOVAK: I want to -- listen -- I want you to listen to a different point of view. And I don't want to give you some Republican or administration official. I want to give you a Democrat, not only a Democrat, but a Democrat that Paul Begala managed his campaigns to be elected governor. And that is Senator Zell Miller of Georgia. Listen to what Senator Miller said yesterday.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP);

SEN. ZELL MILLER (D), GEORGIA: Any time some of these Democratic candidates who are putting their own partisan politics ahead of the country and saying some of the things that they are saying, you know, whenever Saddam Hussein reads that or Osama bin Laden hears that, that they must be high-fiving one another.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

NOVAK: Do you worry about that, Congresswoman, what you say and what Dennis Kucinich says and the other get-out people, what that does to our enemies, how that encourages them?

SCHAKOWSKY: You know, here we go, Bob, the drumbeat that says that anybody who disagrees with the president in what is clearly a failed policy, poor planning, wishful thinking, is somehow then aiding and abetting the enemy.

That is such a dangerous kind of statement and allegation to make. What we are saying is that we support our troops. We support the goal of peace in this world. And we think that this

president has taken us on a very dangerous course, getting into the war in the first place, a preemptive strike and now his utter inability to plan and to get us out of there in a way that makes Iraq a democracy. This has been a failure. We should say it.

(APPLAUSE)

(CROSSTALK)

NOVAK: Congresswoman, when you say the troops ought to get out now, or soon...

SCHAKOWSKY: No, I have never said that.

(CROSSTALK)

NOVAK: When do you want the troops to get out, then?

SCHAKOWSKY: Look, we need to make sure that we have a successful outcome in Iraq. I agree with

that. How do we get there? The president said he has the right strategy.

NOVAK: You want the terror to stay, then?

SCHAKOWSKY: Here's what we should do.

First of all, I say, let's get rid of Donald Rumsfeld. He's about as successful in handling the war as the president is in creating jobs.

(APPLAUSE)

SCHAKOWSKY: We have to get rid of that leadership.

NOVAK: You want the troops to say -- can you answer that? I asked you three times. Do you want the troops to stay or go? Stay or go?

SCHAKOWSKY: We need more troops. And that includes U.N. and allied troops.

NOVAK: You won't answer the question.

(CROSSTALK)

SCHAKOWSKY: And that would include the Iraqis.

Do we need more personnel on the ground? I think we do. Does it necessarily have to be more American

troops? No. We need to internationalize this. And that means giving more power to our allies in the postwar situation.

PENCE: Jan, if I can interject here, there are 30,000 troops from our coalition partners on the ground. We've gone from zero Iraqi troops in uniform on May 1 to 100,000 Iraqis in uniform today. We've actually reduced our troops from 150,000 to 130,000.

I honestly don't understand the criticism of suggesting that we're going in the wrong direction in terms of bringing the family of nations and the people of Iraq to bear on this challenge.

(APPLAUSE)

BEGALA: Well, here's what makes a lot of people think it's going in the wrong direction. It's comment

like that. In the face of the worst day of casualties that we've had since the president declared major combat operations had ended six months ago, there's still no recognition that the plan we have is failing.

See, the argument -- we're talking past each other.

(CROSSTALK)

PENCE: What's the definition of failure? Resistance?

BEGALA: No, definition of failure is losing a kid a day and \$1 billion a week, Congressman, when we could have a different plan, the way we did in Kosovo.

NOVAK: Those are not kids. They're troops. They're

troops. They're not kids.

BEGALA: They're heroic young men.

(CROSSTALK)

NOVAK: Don't call them kids. They're troops.

(CROSSTALK)

BEGALA: They are young men in harm's way, and young women, increasingly.

(CROSSTALK)

SCHAKOWSKY: They are our kids, our daughters and our sons. They are our children who are there. And we do need a better plan. Of course we need a plan.

(APPLAUSE)

NOVAK: You remember, Congresswoman, when I asked you on April 7 if you weren't thrilled by the performance of our troops in removing the tyrant, Saddam Hussein? I asked you four times on April 7, some of them from the Chicago area. You would not say you were thrilled, because you said they had brought death and destruction to Iraq.

Do you remember me telling you that?

SCHAKOWSKY: Do you remember, Bob Novak, when you were opposing the U.S. entry into Iraq and invading Iraq? Do you remember that?

NOVAK: I'm saying, do you remember saying that that was death and destruction? Do you?

(CROSSTALK)

PENCE: Let me tell you, Paul, if I can back to the question you were asking me before this brawl, look...

BEGALA: The question is whether we have the right plan.

(CROSSTALK)

PENCE: Well, whether we have the right plan or whether this is in fact a failure.

And, Jan, I respect you immensely, but I don't understand the definition of failure here. We executed a plan in Operation Iraqi Freedom that was virtually flawless. We had very minimal civilian casualties. We literally took down Iraqi divisions in historic numbers in a historic period of time. We have troops on the ground. And the overwhelming majority of this country is peaceful and secure. The Sunni Triangle, we are faced with leftover Baathist

members and terrorists coming into the country. I don't understand the definition of failure because there are people on the ground that want to kill Americans and disrupt the transition to peace and democracy.

(CROSSTALK)

SCHAKOWSKY: I would happily explain failure to you. And that would be an increase in the sophistication and the effectiveness of the opposition

forces, no real plan for how we get out, the increasing number of American young men and women being killed over there, no democracy coming, sabotage daily on oil wells and the electrical system, lack of security, increased lack of security in Iraq right now.

To say that's it's a success, to use the words of John McCain, is, duh, as my kids would say.

(APPLAUSE)

(CROSSTALK)

BEGALA: In fact, Senator Chuck Hagel, himself a decorated combat veteran, said that we had done -- the Bush administration did a miserable job -- I'm quoting him -- a miserable job of planning for post-Saddam Iraq.

PENCE: Well, and I disagree strongly with Senator Hagel on that.

But I also disagree with Jan today. The characterization that our security has become more lax, that we're losing troops in increasing number, the truth is that, despite a horrific day on Sunday, where we lost 16 soldiers in an attack on a Chinook helicopter, we've

actually begun to see our offensive operations begin to succeed within the Sunni Triangle, Paul.

And we're also beginning to see greater effectiveness in terms of intercepting terrorist attacks. We intercepted the Syrian with the car bomb and stopped him before he could do any damage. Even in the last several hours, the mortar fire in Baghdad reported no casualties, no impacts, thuds, and no reports of

damage.

(CROSSTALK)

BEGALA: Congresswoman Schakowsky

, hold that thought just a minute, because we're going to come back after this break for our "Rapid Fire" segment. And I'm going to ask Congressman Pence why some say that the Bush administration is in fact

dishonoring the sacrifice of our heroic war dead.

And, right after the break, Wolf Blitzer will have the very latest on today's attack in Iraq.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK) (NEWS BREAK)

BEGALA: It is six months and two days since our president stood under that banner declaring mission accomplished. And yet, the postwar death toll now dwarfs the number killed in full-scale combat.

In the CROSSFIRE to debate Iraq policy, Democratic Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky and Indiana Republican

Congressman Mike Pence.

NOVAK: Congressman, the ABC/"Washington Post" poll shows that Americans feel that troops in Iraq are part of the war on terrorism, 61 percent yes, 37 percent no. Do you agree with the American people on that?

SCHAKOWSKY: Well, I agree with the American

people when 51 percent of them say that they believe that this president is mishandling the war in Iraq.

That's the first time since it began that the majority of Americans do not say that the president is handling this war -- this situation well. That, I do agree with.

(CROSSTALK)

**BEGALA: Excuse me,
Congresswoman. Sorry
about that.**

**Congressman Pence,
shouldn't the Bush
administration reverse its**

policy and allow us to publicly honor our war dead as they return in caskets?

PENCE: I'm going to agree with you once this year, Paul, on this issue...

(LAUGHTER)

PENCE: ... and say that we ought to lift the curtain and we ought to be willing to receive these fallen soldiers home. I thought the president's comments today in Kentucky were a part of that reflection. I expect we'll see some modification of that policy.

NOVAK: Congresswoman, since Dennis Kucinich, your

colleague in the Democratic caucus from Ohio, wants to pull out the troops tomorrow, why don't you endorse him for president? You haven't endorsed anybody yet.

SCHAKOWSKY: I haven't endorsed anybody yet. I think that it is a good thing that all of the Democratic candidates

**right now are, in fact,
raising serious questions.
Most are critical of the
president and the
administration's handling
of the situation in Iraq.
And I am not, Bob, calling
for withdrawal of the
troops from Iraq.**

NOVAK: You want them to stay, then.

BEGALA: (AUDIO GAP) He wants more troops in. Do you agree with him?

(BELL RINGING)

PENCE: On this point, I don't. I am going to defer to General John Abizaid and the secretary of defense.

NOVAK: Out of time.

**Congressman Pence,
thank you very much.
Congresswoman Schakow
sky ,
thank you.**

**Tomorrow is Election Day.
But we'd like to know
which Democratic
presidential candidate was
first elected to the U.S.**

Senate on this very date in 1992. Was it Carol Moseley Braun, John Edwards, or John Kerry?

And one of our viewers thinks he knows what I would consider a perfect day. He really doesn't, but we'll let him fire back anyway.

