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Inglis opposes Iraq deadlines
War foes interrupt news conference

Published: Tuesday, March 20, 2007 - 2:00 am
Updated: Tuesday, March 20, 2007 - 11:28 am

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In a parking lot press conference interrupted by a pair of vocal anti-war dissidents, Republican U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis on Thursday called a House Democratic plan setting deadlines for withdrawal from Iraq "unacceptable."

Inglis said he opposes that plan "because it contemplates only withdrawal as a consequence of failure to meet benchmarks" that measure success in ending sectarian violence.

Last month, he ran into criticism from Republicans with a vote for a Democratic resolution critical of President Bush's proposed troop surge. At the time, Inglis said he wanted to send a message to the Iraqi government that it must meet its obligations.

Floor debate on Democratic resolutions to add a series of benchmarks and withdrawal deadlines to a bill for war financing is scheduled for this week.

Advertisement Inglis wrote to President Bush on Feb. 26, suggesting "success checkpoints" to allow measurement of Iraqi leaders' success to better hold them accountable.

"Withdrawal is the Democratic leadership's only solution if the Iraqis fall short of the benchmarks," Inglis said Monday, calling the plan too simplistic and too limiting of the executive branch. "We should have benchmarks, but the response shouldn't be all or nothing," he said.

The press conference in the parking lot of a Rutherford Road eatery reflected some of the split in the electorate over the war.

Handing Inglis a copy of a letter she said she had written to a niece and nephew in the Army, antiwar activist Efia Nwangaza interrupted Inglis' call for questions from reporters to make a statement.

While Nwangaza harangued Inglis, an unidentified opponent of the war and another man argued loudly behind the semi-circle of reporters and friends and relatives of Staff Sgt. Michael Parker, on whom Inglis had just bestowed the Bronze Star for "exceptionally meritorious service" in Iraq.

Nwangaza told Inglis, "For me this is not an intellectual exercise but a matter of life and death, so I am anxious to have the war de-funded, anxious to not leave my niece and nephew in jeopardy of being murdered because this government has not provided for health care, access to education with adequate Pell Grants, scholarships and grants, that students are forced out of school with \$100,000 loans."

"I want to know precisely what it is that you intend to do to get my niece and my nephew out of harm's way," Nwangaza asked as Inglis sought to continue.



Inglis said, "I'm certainly concerned about everyone in harm's way in Iraq. The challenge is to get the Iraqi leadership to make decisions and if they can make those decisions, if they make those decisions that can stop some of the sectarian violence, that's the violence that's endangering your niece and nephew."
