

This is a printer friendly version of an article from GoUpstate.com

To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published Apr 13, 2007

Inglis: 'Success checkpoints' key

By JASON SPENCER, Staff Writer

U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis said Thursday that two days in Iraq have reinforced his belief that America must set deadlines for progress in order to speed up the end of this country's involvement there.

Inglis, R-S.C., calls them "success checkpoints" - benchmarks that would pressure Iraqis into stepping up their pace, particularly on questions about how that country will divide its oil revenue, and how it will deal with removing members of Saddam Hussein's party from positions of power.

"Success checkpoints are a good thing because they would bring a need for progress in Baghdad," Inglis said in a telephone news conference from Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. Inglis is overseas as part of a delegation of three Republicans and three Democrats.

"It is not time to withdraw, not time to set a timetable for withdrawal, and not time to cut off funding," he said. "It is time to insist on forward progress by the Iraqi leadership and to say, 'You don't have forever. Decide these questions. Not in your sweet time. We have the right to tell you because we have a lot of lives at risk. We have a right to tell you to speed up.' "

It's an idea that separates Inglis from other Republicans in Congress, including South Carolina's own Sen. Lindsey Graham.

"Anything that you do is a message not only to the Iraqi government, but to the enemy," Graham said earlier this week. "We need to look for better performance. But when you set deadlines and benchmarks, then you're telling the enemy what they have to do to drive you out."

Graham, a longtime supporter of presidential hopeful John McCain, also pointed out that "the Republican primary voter is not ready for deadlines and timelines."

Inglis said he would defer to Graham's expertise on Iraq, and that he didn't want to get into a debate with this state's senior senator in the pages of a newspaper.

But he added that over lunch Thursday, Kurdish regional Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani confirmed the need for "success checkpoints."

Barzani "told us very plainly that Baghdad needs to be pushed along to progress," Inglis said.

"It was very interesting to hear this from an Iraqi - he's a Kurd, but he's also an Iraqi. He said that if you do things for people, they never learn to do things themselves. He said (that) there are egos involved in the leadership contest in Baghdad, and they just need to be pushed along to make progress."

Underscoring Inglis' belief is the congressman's recent vote against the Bush Administration-backed troop surge in Iraq. Touring the country, Inglis said that he could understand the argument that more U.S. troops could bring about more security in Iraq, making progress possible.

But at the same time, Inglis said that "success checkpoints" would give Iraqis even more reason to do it.

The effects of the so-called surge are hard to measure this early on, University of South Carolina political science professor Harvey Starr said this week.

So far, it looks to be having the same result as when police concentrate their efforts on a certain criminal activity in American cities, he said.

"In a short-term analysis, the effects of the surge so far seem to me much more analogous to these police situations, where a very, very strong initiative reduces crime in a specific area," Starr said. "When the initiatives are over, crime tends to come back."

Graham, who just spent nine days in Iraq as part of a delegation led by McCain, this week trumpeted the success of the U.S. surge, and touted the gradual progress he says he saw in Iraq.

"It's important to see elements of progress, but it's also important to see a realistic lay of the land," Inglis said.

"There are some signs of progress - we were able to drive in from the airport; we did get out of the Green Zone; we did hear some good things in Anbar province, with shutting down al-Qaida. But I don't want to overstate that. It would be a disservice to overstate the progress. It is still a very tough situation, and a very tough place."

Jason Spencer can be reached at 562-7214 or jason.spencer@shj.com.

• .