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Inglis: Put heat on leaders in Iraq

Legislator says strategy is best way to get results

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U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis, right, tells Dave Rickell at a town-hall meeting at Wade's Restaurant Monday that the U.S. should set checkpoints toward progress that Iraqi leaders must pass before they receive

any rewards.

The troop surge has been a military success, Rep. Bob Inglis, R-S.C., told a gathering at Wade's Restaurant Monday, but Iraq is still in desperate need of political reconciliation among its leaders.

"We've got to make these people meet," Inglis said of the Iraqi political leaders. "We've got the right to do it as their protectors, and the obligation to do it for our servicemen and women."

At his monthly "Let's Talk" meeting at Wade's, Inglis got nods of agreement from the group of about 20 as he discussed the need for a political solution in Iraq and laid out his own plan for progress.

In February, Inglis drew fire from some area Republicans when he broke ranks with his party and President Bush and voted against the troop surge, which added about 30,000 more American troops to the force in Iraq.

Inglis dismissed the calls by some to immediately leave Iraq. He also said he remains opposed to the setting of deadlines for withdrawing troops and funds from Iraq, an idea he voted against earlier this year, shortly after his vote against the troop surge.

"If you do that, you may actually speed up the sectarian gelling," Inglis said. "If they hear that we're leaving at a certain date, they'll become far more sectarian because ... they'll be taking care of their own."

Inglis called his idea for Iraq a "carrot-and-stick" strategy, by which the United States would set a series of "success checkpoints" for the Iraqi leadership to meet. The United States would offer to help the country build its infrastructure, but not until Iraq met its own obligations toward progress.

Inglis admitted that Bush probably would not agree with his plan because it seems to set some limits on U.S. support for the effort, but he said he believes his plan probably is not far from the ideas of people who believe the United States should not leave Iraq until success is achieved.

"What does it mean 'until we're done?' " Inglis asked. "What is success? I think now, success is stability in Iraq. You can't guarantee it, but you give them a reasonable opportunity for stability."

Brig. Gen. Ed Hall, former commander of the 2nd Brigade of the State Guard and a veteran of the Vietnam War, was at Monday's discussion and said he liked Inglis' positions.

"He's got some good ideas. I'd like to see some of the things he talked about happen," Hall said. "There needs to be some sort of progressive idea of getting them to respond to that concept. 'OK, we'll build you a water plant, but to get it, you're going to have to do this.' "

David Rickell of Spartanburg said he appreciated the idea of making the Iraqi government more accountable.

"At the end of the day without accountability, it's going to be very difficult to bring it to an end," Rickell said. "I agree that you have to both push and pull in most situations."

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