

Senate Floor
July 31, 2008

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Mr. WEBB. Madam President, I want to take a few minutes today to speak about the state of paralysis we seem to have found ourselves in on the Senate floor, and then also to make a brief comment about two nominations the Senate will be considering. ...

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The second nomination I want to mention is that, regrettably, I am unable to support the nomination for the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. This is an individual who, in an earlier billet, at a key time after the invasion of Iraq, was asked repeatedly to give answers to a question for which I personally believe there were answers. I was writing about it at the time. I have very strong feelings about this. Regrettably, I am going to be unable to support that nomination.

I go back to what General Matthew Ridgway said some 50 years ago, when he was describing the role of a military adviser. He said:

He should give his competent professional advice on the military aspects of the problems referred to him, based on his fearless, honest, objective estimate of the national interest, and regardless of administration policy at any particular time. He should confine his advice to the essentially military aspects.

I believe if we do not insist on this standard in the relationships between the U.S. military and the Congress, then we are going to continue to have the same difficulties that we saw with attempting to get straight comment out of the U.S. military as we went into Iraq.

There was a very wise Marine general who said, at the time I was entering the Marine Corps, ``It is very important in the United States to get the politics out of the military and to keep the military out of politics." I believe that, if we believe in that, we need to insist that those military officers who testify before the Congress abide by it.

With that, I yield the floor.