

Congressman Pence appeared on "The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer" today to discuss his opposition to the Democrat resolution opposing the troop surge and explain his support for our new way forward in Iraq.

The transcript of his appearance follows below:

WOLF BLITZER: We're joined by a key member of the House of Representatives, a Republican who supports the President's troop buildup plan in Iraq, that would be Congressman Mike Pence of Indiana. He introduced a GOP alternative resolution opposing any cutoff funding for the troops in Iraq. Congressman, thanks very much for coming in.

REP. MIKE PENCE: Thank you, Wolf.

WOLF: Let me read the exact two-sentence resolution the Democrats have put forward. "Congress and the American people will continue to support and protect the members of the United States Armed Forces who are serving or who have served bravely and honorably in Iraq. And Congress disapproves of the decision of President George W. Bush, announced on January 10, 2007, to deploy more than 20,000 additional United States combat troops to Iraq." There will be plenty of Republicans, as you know, your colleagues, who will support Nancy Pelosi and John Murtha and vote in favor of this resolution. What do you say to those Republicans who vote in favor of this resolution?

REP. PENCE: Well, I respect the franchise of every Member of Congress, Democrats and Republicans alike. But I think this is a really extraordinarily important moment in the life of our nation. I believe it's imperative that we stand with our Commander in Chief. The President has looked --

WOLF: Are these members who vote for this resolution Democrats and Republicans undermining the Commander in Chief?

REP. PENCE: Well, in a very real sense. The President of the United States, as Commander of Chief under Article 2 of the Constitution, Wolf, has laid out his strategy for achieving the stability --

WOLF: Congress has oversight responsibilities, as you well know.

REP. PENCE: Congress has responsibilities under Article One of the Constitution. We have the power to declare war and the power of the purse strings to appropriate funding. But when it comes to the conduct of war and the decisions made of a tactical nature, history of the Constitution teach that belong to the Commander of Chief and --

WOLF: If this were Bill Clinton as President and he were engaged in this would the Republicans remain silent and simply let him do whatever he wanted?

REP. PENCE: Well, you know, that's a great hypothetical and I know there is some history there. There was some opposition to President Clinton's actions also in the form of resolutions--

WOLF: Republicans weren't silent then.

REP. PENCE: But let me just say from my perspective as someone who cherishes the Constitution and as someone who truly believes each branch of government has its own role to play, I think it's very important that in this moment we recognize that the President isn't just sending more troops for more troops sake, but, rather Wolf, this is a new strategy, new tactic, new rules of engagement and I think imperative that as many Members of Congress as possible, Republicans and Democrats, stand with the Commander in Chief.

WOLF: It looks though, like the Republican leadership -- you tried to be the leader but you didn't make it -- but the Republican leadership, Boehner and Blunt, they're effectively going to let Republican members vote their conscience on this -- conscience on this sensitive issue. Is that smart to effectively let members vote with the way they want it as opposed to whipping them together and making them, in effect, vote down strict party lines?

REP. PENCE: I think the Republican leaders of the house know this is an issue of conscience for many Americans. Whatever your heart dictates is what --

WOLF: You believe it will hurt the President --

REP. PENCE: What you ought to do, look, I believe as you will hear many members of Congress say over the next three days on our side of the aisle. We are locked in a struggle with Islamic extremism that is global in nature. This is really about being willing to support our Commander in Chief as he deploys additional forces in this central front in the broader War on Terror.

WOLF: John Murtha, a Democrat of Pennsylvania and former Marine combat veteran. He says if the U.S. pulls out its combat forces and let the Iraqis do what they want to, they could find Al Qaeda, they could wrap this up. I want to play a little bit -- a little clip of what he told in "The Situation Room" yesterday.

REP. JOHN MURTHA: The minute we're gone they will take care of al Qaeda by themselves. Al Qaeda will not be a factor once the United States is gone.

WOLF: Do you agree with that -- that Iraqis themselves, our allies could get the job done if we just left?

REP. PENCE: I don't. And I have great respect for John Murtha and consider him a friend. Look. I accept Prime Minister al Maliki at his word. He has outlined a strategy for quelling violence in Baghdad. He has requested six additional brigades, American forces to fill in the gaps of his three brigades that are moving back to Baghdad. No one believes that there is long-term military solution here, but Prime Minister al Maliki and our Commander in Chief have concluded if we can deploy the forces necessary, this temporary increase in forces in Baghdad as the Iraq Study Group recommended, to quell violence, establish stability, and then we can get to the long-term political solution

WOLF: They said a short-term surge in order to bring down the level in the long run.

REP. PENCE: That's lost on a lot of people. I said on the House floor today, the Iraq Study Group recommended a surge of forces to quell violence in Baghdad.

WOLF: They said that was one option that they certainly raised. Let me pick your brain for a second before I let you go, politically. Who do you like among the potential Republican presidential nominees? Would it be Rudy Giuliani, John McCain, and Mitt Romney, someone else?

REP. PENCE: I would tell you I like them all. I think we have an abundance of riches on our side of the aisle while Democrat candidates are focusing; it seems to me, on a lot of externals, styles, on conversations. Every major candidate for the republican nomination is focused on the war on terror, focused on the issues we're going to key on the house floor this week in this debate.

WOLF: Giuliani favoring abortion rights for women, gay rights, gun control? Those are hot button issues for a lot of social conservatives.

REP. PENCE: Let me say I'm a pro life American, I'm a pro life legislator and proud of it. I think it's going to be very important both for Rudy Giuliani and every other republican candidate for president to clarify their view of the courts, their view of roe versus wade.

WOLF: But despite that, you could still vote for him?

REP. PENCE: In the case of Rudy Giuliani he has expressed -- for strict constructionists for court along with justices Roberts and Alito. I think you will hear these various candidates outline their philosophy about the courts and pro life Americans like me with evaluate who our best choice is, but every one of these choices is better on the War on Terror than the whole Democrat field.

WOLF: I'll take that as a tentative yes. Thanks very much, Congressman, for coming in.

REP. PENCE: Thank you, Wolf.