

Levin: Democrats will fund troops, period

by UPI

WASHINGTON - The chairman of the Senate Armed Forces Committee says Democrats will not cut funds for U.S. troops even if President Bush vetoes an Iraq war funding bill.

"We're not going to vote to cut funding, period," Sen. Carl Levin of Michigan said on ABC's "This Week with George Stephanopoulos. Levin appeared with Sen. Jon Kyl of Arizona, chairman of the Senate Republican Conference.

Levin said after a threatened veto of a Democratic bill that calls for substantial troop withdrawal, the congressional majority would bring up a bill that just sets benchmarks for the Iraqi government to meet.

"If that doesn't work and the president vetoes because of that -- and he will -- then that part of it is removed because we're going to fund the troops," Levin said, "and what we will leave ... (is language that) would require the president to certify to the American people if the Iraqis are meeting the benchmarks for political settlement which they, the Iraqi leaders, have set for themselves."

Kyle said even that final language would be unacceptable, and the additional troops sent to Iraq were making an impact. "First of all, (benchmark language is) premised on the notion that the Iraqis aren't listening to us," he said. " ... They are cooperating with us, so that's old news that they're not cooperating. That's one of the reasons this new surge strategy is working."

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