

Point of contact

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Our Q&A with Barry McCaffrey, retired four-star general and former U.S. drug czar, in Dallas last week

Is it over for the United States in Iraq?

Morale is high, but the cadre are on their third and fourth combat tours. After this summer, there will be no more National Guard combat troops available. It's a civil war. The allies are going to leave.

By next Christmas, we're there alone. It's over. We're coming out.

The American people are willing to sustain combat operations in the face of death. They are not willing to take the steady drain of casualties without a chance of achieving victory. Sixty percent [of the U.S. public] have said this was a bad idea. I don't think we're getting them back. I think the next two [presidential candidates] will run on who's got the better plan to withdraw from Iraq.

Should Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld resign?

I have been very careful never to answer that question directly. This is a brilliant, patriotic, hard-working man who has been wrong 51 percent of the time. But our national security policy has gone badly off track, and they're in denial of the evidence they're seeing. A lot of it is due to the inability of the senior Pentagon leadership to serve the president by listening to the advice of top military officers.

Do you see the president's confidence in him wavering?

None.

You monitored the U.S.-Mexico border closely as drug czar. What's your take on the current immigration debate?

The economy would grind to a halt if not for undocumented workers. The notion that we're going to track down 10 to 16 million people and send them back? Not gonna happen and shouldn't happen.

But we also need to do what any civilized nation would do to keep terrorists, criminals and drug gangs out. We've got to fence the border – a physical fence, triple-walled, backed up by technology. We could do it in one year for \$4 billion or less – less than one month's worth of bullets for Iraq.

But you can't do this without a guest worker program. If you don't do both, neither one will work on its own.