



Kaine pushes to repeal Iraq war authorization

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Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., was serving his first year as Virginia's lieutenant governor in 2002 when Congress **authorized the use of military force** against Iraq, and it wasn't lost on him that it took the vote weeks before midterm congressional elections.

The elections would be held just over a year after terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, and retaliatory strikes by the United States against Al-Qaida training camps in Afghanistan, and the ruling Taliban.

But it would be an additional five months after the congressional vote before **U.S. forces invaded Iraq on March 19, 2003**, exactly 20 years ago on Sunday.

[Senate takes first step in repealing Iraq War authorizations](#)

"It clearly seemed to me at the time, that the run up to the war was being significantly influenced, maybe dominated, by political concerns rather than the careful consideration of the country's security," Kaine said. "To commit troops - and ultimately thousands died and tens of thousands were wounded - into a war, when a dominant feature was sort of electioneering and campaign-season politics, deeply offended my sensibilities."

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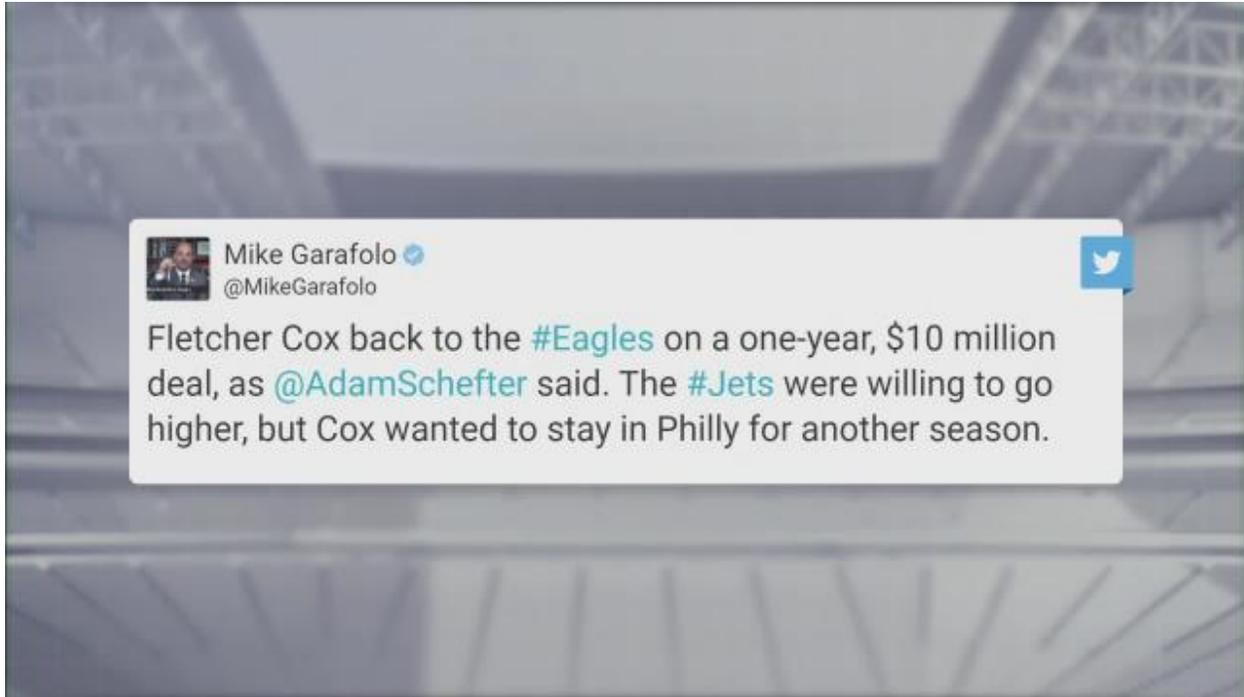
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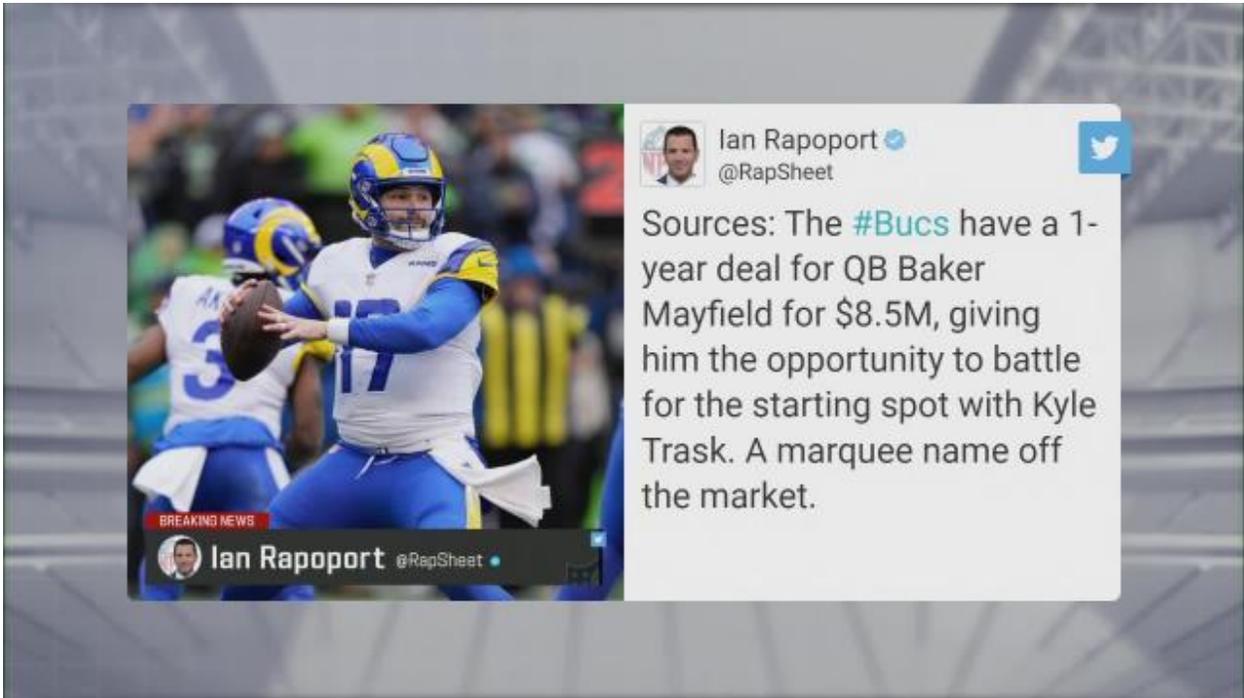
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"I knew something was wrong," he said during a briefing of Virginia media.

On Thursday, Kaine and Sen. Todd Young, R-Ind., persuaded the U.S. Senate to take the first step toward repealing an authorization of military force for the first time since 1971, when Congress ended the Tonkin Gulf Resolution that had allowed then-President Lyndon Johnson to escalate the war in Vietnam. The Senate voted 68-27 to avoid a filibuster and allow a full debate next week on whether to repeal the Iraq war resolution and a military force authorization that Congress had approved in 1991 to allow the U.S. to repel the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in the Gulf War.

U.S. military forces withdrew from Iraq in 2011, but the authorization remains the law. "They had the courage to do their duty. How dare we as Congress not have an urge to simply say after 20 years the war is over, the job is done?" Kaine asked the Senate.

"We owe it to our service members to fulfill our constitutional obligations and vote to end endless wars."

Unlike the vote to repeal the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, accomplished as an amendment to separate legislation, the Senate will act next week on standalone legislation to repeal the two war authorizations. "I'm unaware of one of those occurring in the Senate in my lifetime," Kaine said in a media briefing on Thursday morning.

Immediately after the vote, Kaine and Young appeared outside of the U.S. Capitol with representatives of the American Legion, which voiced strong support for the legislation. Mario Marquez, a retired sergeant-major in the U.S. Marine Corps who served four tours of combat duty in Iraq, said "it is long past time to repeal these authorizations."

Kaine bill to restrict any effort to remove U.S. from NATO advances

"Our force was not built to remain in a perpetual state of war," said Marquez, who serves as director of the American Legion's national security division.

Young, who served three tours in Iraq as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps, said the legislation would not affect the 2001 authorization to use military force in Afghanistan and generally against terrorist threats.

"The war on terror can continue to be conducted," he said.

However, Young said, the repeal is necessary to restore Congress' traditional role in authorizing use of military force under Article 1 of the Constitution. "It is time for Congress to have its voice heard in these matters," he said.

Both senators said the repeal would not limit the war powers of the president under Article 2 of the Constitution. President Joe Biden, a longtime former member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who served two terms as vice president, has publicly expressed support for the legislation.

Kaine said it would discourage presidents from misusing the war authorization for other purposes, not specifically addressed by Congress, as then-President Donald Trump did in 2020 by using the outdated congressional action to justify the assassination of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, who was in Iraq.

Counting two senators who support the measure but were absent for the vote, Kaine and Young said that 70 of the Senate's 100 members support repeal, which they hope will bolster a similar bipartisan coalition in the U.S. House of Representatives. It is now controlled by Republicans under Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., who controls what comes to a vote on the House floor.

Kaine, Warner praise Zelenskyy's heroism and renew support for Ukraine, stopping short of no-fly zone

Kaine said Rep. Abigail Spanberger, D-7th, is one of the Democratic leaders of the effort, along with Republican Reps. Chip Roy of Texas and Tom Cole of Oklahoma.

In the Senate, he said Young has been "enormously successful with his Republican colleagues."

Kaine sought to rally support from political conservatives in an appearance later Thursday at a policy forum that the Cato Institute, a conservative think tank in Washington, conducted on the 20th anniversary of the Iraq War.

"We've got to acknowledge the reality that Iraq is not an enemy, it's a strategic partner," Kaine said in the keynote address at the forum.

He cited the surprise visit to Baghdad last week by Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, who met with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani.

"There are no permanent enemies of the United States," Kaine said.