

Candidate-Veteran Duckworth Blasts Bush on Iraq

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Former Army Major L. Tammy Duckworth is helped by her husband Bryan Bowlsbey, as she walks around to greet supporters after announcing her candidacy for Illinois' 6th Congressional district at her Lombard, Ill., and headquarters in this Dec. 18, 2005, file photo. Duckworth, a Democrat and Iraq War veteran, who lost both legs when her Blackhawk helicopter crashed in Iraq, now faces Republican Peter Roskam in an Illinois open seat. (AP Photo/Brian Kersey)

An Illinois congressional candidate who lost both her legs during combat in Iraq said Saturday that President Bush has no real strategy for securing the war-ravaged nation, just political talk designed to appeal to voters.

"Instead of a plan or a strategy, we get shallow slogans like 'mission accomplished' and 'stay the course,'" former Army Capt. Tammy Duckworth said in the Democrats' weekly radio address. "Those slogans are calculated to win an election. But they won't help us accomplish our mission in Iraq."

Duckworth's address served as a response to the president's weekly radio talk and gave the Democratic Party a chance to showcase one of its strongest candidates as it seeks to regain control of the House in November's elections.

Duckworth, who copiloted a Black Hawk helicopter that crashed while under a rocket grenade attack almost two years ago, also criticized Bush and others in his administration for accusing anyone who challenges the president's policies of "cutting and running."

"Well, I didn't cut and run, Mr. President. Like so many others, I proudly fought and sacrificed," Duckworth said. "My helicopter was shot down long after you proclaimed 'mission accomplished.'"

At a GOP fundraiser Thursday in Alabama, Bush said, "The party of FDR and the party of Harry Truman has become the party of cut and run."

Duckworth is seeking the suburban Chicago seat being vacated by conservative Republican Rep. Henry Hyde. She is running against Illinois State Sen. Peter Roskam, the man Hyde has endorsed.

In her address, Duckworth, now a major in the Illinois National Guard, also lashed out at the GOP-led Congress for refusing to do its job of holding the Bush administration accountable for its flawed Iraq policy.

"We need a Congress that will ask the tough questions and work together for solutions rather than attacking the patriotism of those who disagree," she said. "It is time to encourage Iraqi leaders to take control of their own country and make the tough choices that will stop the civil war and stabilize the country."

She offered no proposal for an immediate withdrawal or a timetable for withdrawal.

Associated Press Writer Deanna Bellandi contributed to this story from Illinois.