

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Nebraska Sen. Ben Nelson said troop supplies have improved vastly since earlier feedback he's received from soldiers serving in Iraq.

Last weekend, Nelson visited the Nebraska troops who are stationed in the Middle East . He was part of a trip that included Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, Nebraska

Rep. Lee Terry and California Rep. Devin Nunes from April 26-30.

"I felt it was so important to go there and to see for myself what was happening," Nelson said.

Nelson held a town-hall-style meeting with some Nebraska troops. His main priority, he said, was to make sure the troops all had proper protection and communication devices.

"The first time we sent them over, they didn't have communication devices. Their friends and family were buying them walkie-talkies from Wal-Mart and sending them over," Nelson said. "But that has all changed. They showed me their equipment, and it's all modern, up-to-date."

Terry said service members told him they didn't mind extending their stays in , but wished they had been told about the extensions so they had time to prepare.

He said he's optimistic that troops withdrawal can begin in 2008.

"We talked to probably over 100 Marines, Army, from Nebraska . With only one or two exceptions, they said they feel its safer. (They said) they feel like they do need a little more time and they are getting this under control," Terry said.

Nelson and Terry first arrived in the Green Zone of Iraq, and was instantly met with the reality of Baghdad 's violent and political situation, he told Washington Notebook reporter Jenny Nowatzke.

"You hear the rockets coming in, the whistling of the rockets, and it's a little disconcerting. It's virtuously impossible to keep peace, law and order in Baghdad . It's a war-ravaged community," said Nelson.

Terry agreed. Speaking to a KETV NewsWatch 7 reporter on Friday in Omaha , Terry said the nature of the violence is changing.

"It's very intense," Terry said. "The violence is still significant. But it has switched. You don't have as much sectarian operations, but Al Qaeda has filled that vacuum. The good new is, the Iraqi people are now doing something about it."

Nelson met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and the Iraqi press before meeting with the troops.





After chatting with service members over the course of several days, Nelson said he felt wistful about leaving them behind.

"They are brave men and women, and they and their families have sacrificed a great deal," Nelson said.

Unfortunately, he said, he knows that many more sacrifices will need to be made before the war is over.

"We're hoping the Iraqi government will accept the fact that this war can't be won militarily, it has to be won politically," Nelson said.

On Friday, the military said an American soldier had been killed and two hurt by a roadside bomb south of Baghdad . In all, three similar attacks and fighting in Anbar province have killed five soldiers and wounded 11 in the past two days.



