Mr. President, I was a Member of the Senate when we

voted to authorize the use of force against Iraq. It was not just a

rapid, quickly done deal, we talked about it for months. We talked

about primarily the 16 or 17 resolutions that Saddam Hussein had failed

to comply with that he agreed to with the United States and the United

Nations; that he was setting about systematically to break out of the

box of the embargo placed on him because he failed to comply with those

resolutions.

We were flying, if you remember, aircraft over Iraq on a regular

basis, and they were shooting missiles at us, trying to bring down our

aircraft. We were dropping bombs on them on a weekly basis. This was

the context of the debate that we entered into.

At the end, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the question of

weapons of mass destruction by the President and others. But for most

of us, I think it was a strategic American decision based on the

fundamental questions: Were we going to give up? Were we going to let

the embargo elapse? And would Saddam Hussein be able to continue to

say--actually say with conviction and some honesty--that he had won the

1991 gulf war? He said he won the war. He never complied with the

agreements that he entered into and, as a result, we entered this

conflict.

The initial invasion went far better than most of us believed

possible, than many predicted--those who supported the war and those

who did not. The aftermath has been much more troubling and difficult.

I have been one of those who shared General Abizaid's view of let's

keep the number of our troops as low as we can, let's push as hard as

we can to train and bring on the Iraqi forces, and let's let their

government be responsible for its own activities as soon as possible.

But I have to be honest, it has been more difficult than most of us

would have thought. We now have many soldiers there in dangerous

circumstances. So I am concerned about that. I respect anybody who is

concerned about that.

I am not here to say I know you are wrong, that I know this is the

only way and the only right policy, and I guarantee you it will be

successful. I want to say that in the beginning. We have some difficult

choices to make, and I respect people who don't agree.

I am not able, however, to justify a resolution that appears to be

designed to embarrass the President, appears to be contradictory to our

Nation's policy, that would indicate to our adversaries and enemies

that we are divided. I cannot see that as a positive step for us. I am

inclined to agree with the view of General Petraeus. He finished at the

top of his class at West Point. He was No. 1 in his class at the

Command and General Staff College. He got his Ph.D. at Princeton. He

was in Mosul, right after the initial invasion, commanding the 101st

Airborne Division. He was a Ranger, a soldier, a fabulous leader. I saw

him in operation when some of the Alabama National Guard members had

felt they were not being fully utilized right after they got to Mosul.

I told General Petraeus, and he said:

He told them:

That was such an example of leadership, I thought. Later, he showed

how they captured Uday and Qusay under his command. He showed how they

formed the government. He had a Sunni, Shia, Christian, and a Kurd on

the city council. He formed a court system. He was a fabulous leader

and everybody recognized that. He finished his tour and came back.

We realized that we needed to spend more effort and be more effective

in training the Iraqi Army. So we sent him over there. We asked him to

go back. He went back to specifically be in charge of training the

Iraqi security forces. During that time, he got to know virtually every

major Iraqi military leader. He knows them personally and he worked

with them and with most of the Iraqi leadership. He said he didn't know

Prime Minister Maliki, but he knows most of them.

After some 15 months at that, well over 2 years in Iraq, he came back

home and he was placed in charge of writing the doctrine for the U.S.

Department of Defense on how to confront and defeat an insurgency

operation, the so-called Counterinsurgency Manual. It is a real serious

document. A lot of people don't know this, but there are ways--proven

ways--to confront and defeat insurgency operations. In fact, one

military historian recently pointed out that very few insurgency

operations ultimately become successful. They can cause great distress

for substantial periods of time, but they usually fail. There is a

fairly significant number--70, 80, 90 percent--that fail, according to

this report. So this manual that he painstakingly put together had

incredible subtleties in it about how to handle various situations

because every situation is different. What might be true in the Kurdish

north may not be true in Bosra, the Shia south, or in the Sunni west.

Every part of the Sunni and Shia and Kurdish areas are different

themselves. Their tribes and their heritage and their religious sects

are different. You have to handle them all differently.

President Bush asked General Petraeus to help formulate a plan to be

successful in Iraq. He committed to him five additional brigades, over

20,000 soldiers. That is a bitter pill to me. I was very pleased--and I

spoke out when some were critical--and in favor of General Casey over a

year ago saying he hoped to be able to bring troops home. He brought

some home. He asked for more at different times. What happened? Well,

violence began to pick up substantially in Baghdad. The Sunni and al-

Qaida terrorists saw the country beginning to come together, and they

decided to make a devilish decision, and that decision was to

deliberately provoke a sectarian conflict. They began to attack the

Shia in the marketplaces and they attacked their holy mosque at

Samarra. They blew up that mosque and killed people. It began to work.

Shia militias began to grow and strengthen and develop, feeling they

were not being protected by the government. They began to kill Sunnis,

and people would find bodies that had been killed execution style. It

was a very grim thing to happen. It still is going on to a substantial

degree.

But I believe that this can be reversed. I cannot guarantee that, but

I believe it can be reversed with the leadership of the United States,

with increased effort on behalf of the Iraqi military and the country

of Iraq, that they can begin to reverse this trend. I will just cite

that recently General Conway testified at a hearing. He commanded the

Marines in the western part of Fallujah and during some of the toughest

fighting. Now commandant of

the Marine Corps, he testified a few days ago. I told him about the

visit Senators Levin, Warner, Pryor, and I made to Iraq last fall. The

briefing that we had gotten by the Marines in the Ramadi area really

concerned me. Some of the information they gave--and the Presiding

Officer and I traveled over there, and I know he cares about these

issues. That briefing was one of the more troubling things I had heard

in visiting there five times, as I have. He pointed out how, in just a

matter of weeks, that made a dramatic change; that 12 out of 16 tribal

leaders in that area have gotten fed up with al-Qaida and their

murdering ways, their parasitic ways, and their domination. And they

have made agreements with the U.S. military. We are helping them create

their own law enforcement entities, hiring their young people, and they

are resisting al-Qaida. There has been a dramatic change in the

toughest area, the Sunni area, the area where most of al-Qaida has

been. So that is good.

I say to my colleagues that can happen in Baghdad. Don't think that

because things have been very difficult in the last year they cannot

begin to get better. General Petraeus has stepped up. We are going to

increase our forces. The Iraqis are going to increase their forces. I

think the Iraqis know this may be their last chance to save this

country as a decent and progressive country that treats people fairly

and equally. I think they are beginning to wake up to that fact--I hope

so. They are moving substantial numbers of troops in there. They are

not as good as the American troops in many ways. They have a lot of

difficulties. We know that. But they have taken more casualties than we

have, and they continue to sign up. We have an opportunity, I believe,

to make a difference.

If this effort does not succeed and we do not begin to notice that

more progress has been made, that the Iraqis do not meet certain

benchmarks we have called on them to make, then we do need to review

our policy. I have to say it. What we will do then, I am not sure. But

we need to be smart about it. We don't need to be aberrational or

spasmodic in how we face those challenges.

What happened on the floor of the Senate is not something that I

think has brought credit to this body. After approving General Petraeus

to go to Iraq 94 to 0, after making clear we intend to fund the policy

the President, as Commander in Chief, is executing, our soldiers are

executing, and soldiers have been sent over there as part of this

surge--some have already gotten there as part of this surge--it became

a goal of the majority leader, Senator Reid, and the Democratic

leadership, apparently, to vote on a resolution that disapproved it,

that criticized the President, I guess to make happy some of the people

out there who oppose this war so deeply, some with great passion and

legitimate concerns and some with fevered brow who believe we are over

there trying to steal Iraqi oil. But that crowd is out there. They want

a resolution that is critical of the President and this policy.

Our leader, the Republican leader, said: You can have that vote, that

will be all right, let's have that vote, but Senator McCain has a

different view. Senator McCain's view is we need to set some benchmarks

for the Iraqis and we need to support the President. Senator Gregg said

it is most important when troops are in harm's way, when they are

placing their lives at risk for us, that we tell them we are going to

support them financially. Oh, no, we can't vote on those amendments. We

are only going to vote on the one we want.

This resolution, by the way, should have come, by historical

tradition and rules of the Senate, out of the Armed Services Committee,

but it didn't come out of the Armed Services Committee. Why didn't it

come out of the Armed Services Committee, of which I am a member?

Because it doesn't have the votes. It wouldn't have passed out of the

Armed Services Committee. So what Senator Reid did is, he filed it as a

bill instead of a resolution. He filed it and, under rule XIV, brought

it to the floor and determined that no other amendments could be

accepted or even voted on, only his view should be voted on. And they

carefully calculated, I am sure, to make sure they had over 50 votes,

so they would be able to pass one resolution that was deemed an attack

on the President and a rejection of the policy we are now funding and

is being executed by our soldiers who are far more worthy, in my view,

of maturity and respect than a Congress that gets itself tied up in

this kind of mess.

I think most of us on this side--even some Republicans and some

Democrats who supported the resolution--have refused to vote for

cloture to bring it up for a vote because they think Senator McCain's

and Senator Gregg's resolutions deserve a vote too. Senator McCain

said: I would just be satisfied if you vote on Gregg if you don't vote

on mine.

I would like to vote on both of them, and I am not afraid to vote on

the Democratic resolution. I would vote on all three of them. I am not

afraid to talk about this war or to talk about the resolutions. But

somehow the media has adopted the Democrat's talking points and

suggests Republicans don't want to debate and vote on the issue. That

is not true. How many times do we have to say that? I don't think what

I said is inaccurate. If it is, I would like to be corrected on the

fundamental debate in which we find ourselves.

But what I wish to say to my colleagues is we are, at this very

moment, in reality, financially supporting the policy with which they

disagree. Advice and suggestions from business, athletics, church, and

families needs to be welcome, but naysaying after a decision is reached

is nearly always destructive, in my opinion. People have to pull

together once a decision is reached. We only have one Commander in

Chief. We have the absolute power to shut off every dime going to Iraq

and bring our troops home immediately. That is the constitutional power

this Congress has. But while we are executing this effort in Iraq, we

only have one Commander in Chief. And for the life of me, I can see no

advantage to our Nation, to our foreign policy or to our soldiers in a

resolution that disagrees with the President's plan, a plan to which we

have our soldiers committing their lives this very moment.

Congress should either support it or stop it. But, of course, we all

know the awesome responsibility that voting for a precipitous

withdrawal out of Iraq would entail because stopping the funding for

Iraq is real, just like funding Iraq is real, just like voting for

General Petraeus is real. It is not positioning, it is not an

expression of concern or an effort to distance oneself from a war that

over three-fourths of us in this Senate voted for but has now become

very difficult.

The President studied the Baker-Hamilton report, he met with his

commanders in Iraq and in the United States, and he met with retired

officers, elder statesmen. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,

General Peter Pace, started a bottom-up review of our Iraq policy in

August. I called him about that time to raise some questions and urge

that he do that. He said: Senator, I have started that already. After

all of this evaluation and receipt of ideas for improvement, both

public and private, our President, the one given the power to decide

such issues in our system, made his call. He changed his policy.

Perhaps he should have done it earlier. I think this kind of review

would have been more appropriate earlier.

The President has gone through a deliberative process, though, and

made his decision, and I have decided the right response for me, as a

Member of this Senate trying to serve the national interest, is to

support that policy, at least for the immediate future, and to support

those who will execute it--our military personnel.

Others may disagree. An official expression of disagreement, though,

about a policy we authorized and we are now funding and our soldiers

are executing does not meet, I believe, high standards of

responsibility to which a great Senate should adhere. Please remember

also that what we do is not contained just in these Halls. I am not

persuaded there can be any effect, other than a pernicious one, on

those allies and other nations that are assisting us in our efforts.

Nor do I see how the threat of an imminent withdrawal could cause the

Iraqi Government and the leaders of the various sects and groups to be

more willing to reach an accord than would be achieved if we continue

assistance in restoring

order, particularly in the nation's capital. I don't know. I don't

think so myself. If it was so, I would be persuaded. If that would be

the result of a rapid withdrawal, that they would all get together and

reach an accord, then I would support it because I don't think we need

to be an occupying force in Iraq. But this is not what our generals

tell us. It is not what we have heard from the intelligence community.

Some people said: I talked to a retired general; that is what he

said. Maybe that is what he said. Maybe that retired general is right.

The people we are hearing about are not saying this is any kind of

panacea, to pull out, and there is going to be harmony and compromise

reached all at once.

In fact, many are saying the violence in Baghdad is so significant

that if we allow it to continue to grow, it makes it harder for the

warring factions to get together and reach an accord.

Still, despite the difficulties, our experts in public and private

conversations believe there is hope for stability with this new policy

in Iraq, this new surge. They give that evaluation with full and

realistic evaluations of all the challenges we face. The new Iraqi

permanent Government has only been formed for 8 months, maybe 9 months

now. That Government has only been up for 8 or 9 months. The forces of

violence, oppression, and extremism have attacked it full force. They

are determined to bring it down. But it still stands, and it has made

new commitments to taking the necessary steps toward security and

progress.

This is a test for them, no doubt. Maybe they will fail. Maybe they

would not meet the commitments they have made. But perhaps not. Perhaps

this fragile Government and the Iraqi Army working in new and better

ways with General Petraeus and our forces together can be successful,

as our experts tell us is possible and realistic.

I, thus, have concluded this Congress should fund this new strategy,

not adopt a resolution that has any tendency whatsoever to lessen the

chance of that strategy being successful.

Finally, I do not see how a congressional resolution that disagrees

with, or one that rejects the President's new policy will have any

other effect than to reduce the morale of our soldiers.

Right out here a couple of days ago, I talked with a group from

Hartsville, AL. The man pulled me aside and said his son was an

infantry officer at Fort Benning. He said: Senator, I want you to know

one thing. When you make your decisions, don't think they don't know

what is going on. He said: ``They are watching you like a hawk.''

We have a responsibility to them. Yes, we have a responsibility to

say pull out if we have to pull out, if that is the thing to do--and I

don't think it is yet; I think we have a chance for success. If that is

our decision, so be it. But when we send them over there, they should

be supported. They should have no doubt that we are going to be with

them.

We are waging a war against violent extremists who bomb markets, who

behead people who disagree with them, who murder, who kill, who destroy

teachers because they teach young girls how to read and write. So this

is a complex effort. It is an important effort that to date has

protected our homeland from further attack.

We didn't choose this duty. It has fallen to us. By working together,

I believe we can achieve more in Iraq than many people think.

And I will say this, while we are being very serious about the

challenges we face. I have had personal meetings with Secretary Gates,

the new Secretary of Defense, and an extended meeting with GEN Peter

Pace, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and I had a good long

conversation with General Petraeus, the new commander in Iraq, and

Admiral Fallon, who is going to be the Central Command, commander. I

have asked them, and each one of them stated to me that they fully

understand their responsibility to give us their best military advice,

and if at any time this conflict in Iraq becomes untenable, if at any

time they conclude that putting more soldiers into harm's way will not

be successful and will not achieve the aims which we are seeking there,

they will tell us.

I asked Peter Pace that in an open hearing, and he said: ``Yes, sir,

Senator, I understand that.'' Secretary Gates cut in and said:

``Senator, I fully understand that, and I feel like that is my number

one responsibility.'' I asked General Petraeus that, and he said the

same. And I asked him if he believed he could be successful. Remember,

this is the man who spent over 2 years in Iraq. He is the best of the

best. He has written a manual on how to confront and defeat an

insurgency. His answer to whether he can be successful, in sum, was:

``Senator, I do, and I wouldn't be going over there if I didn't think I

could be.''

I know people are worried about this conflict. I am worried about it.

I talked to a widow yesterday, whose fabulous husband was killed in

Iraq, and I don't take it lightly at all. But we are a nation that has

been attacked and we have a responsibility to defend our just national

interest, and our just national interest would be greatly served by a

prosperous, free, democratic Iraq, where terrorists do not find haven

and which is not subverted by hostile forces. We have a national

interest in that, as well as a humanitarian interest.

I think we need to give General Petraeus a chance. I think we may

find that progress in Baghdad can occur, even when it is dark, as it

did in Al Anbar Province a few months ago. I was feeling pretty

discouraged about what was happening there, but great progress has been

made in the last few weeks there. It is time for us to stick together.

I don't think this resolution is good. If we are going to vote on it,

we ought to vote on the Gregg resolution and we ought to vote on the

McCain resolution. Because only together will that convey to the world,

our allies, and our soldiers the real feelings and insights of this

Congress. As I have said from the beginning, I don't favor any

resolution. We have done what we have to do. We sent General Petraeus

and we sent money to execute the policy. I don't know why we have to

have a resolution at all.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a

quorum.