Mr. President, I must say I am disappointed the

Democratic leadership continues to preclude the Senate from debating

and amending the insufficient resolution sent over from the House of

Representatives. This denies the Senate from robustly debating other

alternatives, including the bipartisan Warner resolution.

The strategy is to avoid controversial procedures that split the

Democratic caucus regarding cutting off funding for the troops and

capping the deployment of troops in Iraq. We have the same kind of

split to a degree in the Republican caucus. The Warner resolution

represents a negotiated agreement that reflects a bipartisan approach

to the war and deserves to be debated and voted upon.

This is the second piece of legislation this week that Democratic

leaders have brought to the Senate floor straight from the House with

no amendments for debate allowed, and I think this is setting a

dangerous precedent and frustrates the role the Constitution envisions

for the Senate.

I will continue to back the minority's right to bring up amendments

and participate in real debate, even if I don't agree with those ideas.

I tried to support that when we were in the majority. The American

people want Congress to play a role in the way this war is being

handled. The first step is to demand a better plan, and we owe the

people more than 10 lines in the House Resolution. You can't even begin

to address a real solution to a complex situation in 10 lines.

I wish to emphasize to my colleagues that there are 15 cosponsors of

the Warner resolution, 6 of whom are Republicans and 9 are Democrats.

The resolution has the support of the Democratic chairman of the

Foreign Relations Committee, Joseph Biden, who has been here for many

years--a very wise individual. It has the support of the Democratic

chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Carl Levin. It also has the

support of the No. 2 ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations

Committee, Senator Chuck Hagel. I mention this because I wish to stress

that the Warner resolution is believed to be a fair and reasonable

resolution that is broadly supported by both Republicans and Democrats.

I believe, if given the opportunity, that resolution will attract over

60 votes of the Senate.

That is why tonight I wish to share some of my thoughts about our

current situation in Iraq. I wish to stress that had we received

better, more comprehensive prewar intelligence and done our homework

about what would be needed after the military offensive, we could have

entered Iraq adequately prepared to win the war and secure the peace.

We would have been more adequately prepared. Both the administration

and Congress should have recognized that by removing Saddam Hussein

from office, we would shift the balance of power within the country

from Sunni to Shiite and change the contour of the region. Our

intelligence errors, our lack of troop preparation, and the bungling of

the initial efforts on the ground, specifically disbanding the Army and

isolating former Baathists--in spite of advice from people such as GEN

Jake Garner and others--is unacceptable. And today, we are paying the

price for that, which means all of us have to pay a lot more attention

to every decision and plan we endorse from here on out.

I cannot support the proposed troop surge. In spite of meetings at

the White House, two with the President, private-session briefings as a

member of the Foreign Relations Committee, and a meeting with General

Petraeus for over 40 minutes, I am not convinced the additional troops

who are proposed is the best means toward success in Baghdad. That is

why I have decided to support the Warner resolution.

A military solution is not sufficient to win the peace in Iraq. As I

will get into it, Iraq faces political problems, a power struggle, and

primal hate between the fighting sects. More troops alone cannot solve

these problems. That being said, I continue to have the highest praise

for the generals and, more importantly, for their troops who have

remained steadfast in their efforts to secure Iraq. I am grateful to

those who have served and continue to serve our Nation in a time of

need. I am especially indebted to those who made the ultimate sacrifice

and whose families have suffered and who will grieve and those whose

lives have been changed forever, as well as some 25,000 men and women

who have been wounded over there, 13,000 of them not able to go back

into the service.

Winning this war, securing peace in Iraq and stability in the region

requires a comprehensive approach and the use of different tools, the

most important of which is the will of the Iraqis. At this point, I am

afraid we have focused disproportionately on the military component of

this war, and we have not adequately stressed the nonmilitary arm of

our strategy.

Moving forward in Iraq, we must focus on strengthening our

nonmilitary or political tactics. That is why now, more than ever

before, I am concerned about Iraq's willingness to bring an end to the

violence. As the Warner resolution states:

I recently met with a young man from Ohio out of Bethesda who had

completed three tours of duty in Iraq and who was wounded by an IED. I

asked him what he did. He said: My main goal, Senator, every day was to

keep my men alive and keep peace in the neighborhood.

We have to ask ourselves: How long can we continue to do this? Even

if the surge is successful, how long will we have to stay before the

Iraqis can handle the situation themselves? Even when I talked with

General Petraeus, he did a good job in Mosul--they secured the

neighborhoods--but when the Iraqis came in and they left, they lost it.

How many American lives will be lost in what is best described as a

civil war between Sunni and Shiite that has 1,400 years of Sunni

domination over Shiite at its root? More of our Members of the Senate

should read about the history of Iraq and the people who are there.

After many closed-session briefings with the National Security

Council, four meetings at the White House, including two with the

President, and as I mentioned, 40 minutes with General Petraeus, and

after hearing hours of witnesses testifying before the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee, I can feel confident saying it is time for the

Iraqi people and their leadership to stand up to the sectarian violence

between Sunni and Shiite. They need to recognize that all Iraqis and

the future of the Nation of Iraq is threatened by this constant

bloodshed, and their future is in their hands, not our hands.

U.S. Central Commander GEN John Abizaid, who the President relied

upon to lead the ground campaign in Iraq, testified to Congress on

November 15:

That is General Abizaid. If we don't follow the advice of our

generals and other military people I have talked to, we run the risk of

helping one side at the expense of another, and the Sunnis could

interpret our offensive as part of a larger effort to do the dirty work

of the Shiite. And don't you think the Sunnis would not spin it that

way.

The reality we face today is that an overwhelming majority of the

Muslim population in Iraq, be they Shiite or Sunni, look upon us as

infidels and occupiers. They do. And our presence there is exploited

every day by our enemies. In fact, one poll claimed 60 percent of the

people in Iraq said it is OK to kill Americans. While we cannot even

begin to capture what is happening in the hearts and minds of the

Iraqis with one poll, it sends a striking

message about what additional troops might face there.

We have to consider the reliable information we have that suggests

the surge could ignite an even more aggressive counter-surge, in which

every martyr--every martyr--in the country is drawn to Baghdad to

defeat the infidels, as the Sunnis were drawn to Mecca on Ramadan. We

could see a terrible situation there, and I don't want--I wish to make

clear I am not analogizing the Sunnis going to Mecca on Ramadan. I am

saying it would bring lots of people into Baghdad.

The fact of the matter is we cannot stop the sectarian violence with

combat brigades and more forces alone. Implementing martial law in Iraq

would be impossible because of the sheer number of Iraqi citizens and

our commitments elsewhere around the globe. At this point, we wouldn't

begin to have enough forces.

Mr. President, the only way to bring stability to Iraq is by

addressing a number of serious political problems that lie at the root

of this violence. Before the war, Iraq was united by Saddam's reign of

terror, as Slobadan Milosevic kept everybody under his control or,

before him, Marshal Tito in Yugoslavia. When he was removed from

office, the major power struggle ensued, and it is not surprising. In

fact, it should have been expected. In fact, as we later found out,

many academics and intelligence officers did predict this. In the

aftermath of Saddam's regime, many different sects and local leaders

realized a power shift was taking place, and they wanted to come out on

top. They knew the greatest source of potential power is in oil. That

is why the critical component of the political solution must be to

reach a decision on how the oil can be distributed to all sects and

communities in Iraq. It is absolutely critical that Prime Minister

Maliki moves quickly--tomorrow--to pass the legislation that guarantees

that all Iraqis will benefit from oil. If he can do this, it will show

the sects how the power in Iraq will be dispersed in the future.

Recently, I met with the Foreign Minister, Deputy Prime Minister of

Turkey. The Foreign Minister agreed that the oil situation is the most

important issue today and the one that will have profound impact on the

long-term stability of Iraq. This must be a component of the overall

national reconciliation plan to unite Iraqis and give them confidence

in their Government.

A second key political priority must be the reintegration of the

Sunni Baathists into society. When we went into Iraq, we cut the

Baathists out of the military and security forces. The result of the

policy was they had nowhere to go. They were frightened about their

futures. They could not feed their families. They were angry. They were

resentful. So they went to the streets. Before long, they became part

of the problem, joining with militias and other fighters to resist the

Shia government. So a major political priority must be to develop a

plan to reintegrate the former Baathists and it needs to happen now. It

is essential that the Iraqi Government work toward provincial elections

so there is more equal representation of the different sects.

The third vital component of our nonmilitary strategy must be greater

regional diplomacy. We must work to encourage Iraq's neighbors to get

involved in containing the violence. Specifically, these neighboring

countries have the ability to put pressure on the different sects and

local leaders to help unite the Iraqi Government. They have the ability

to pass debt relief, participate in border control, and help avoid a

potential refugee problem. I don't think people realize that there have

been over 3.5 million refugees who have come out of Iraq.

In December 2006, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group issued their

recommendations for a successful United States strategy in Iraq. A core

component of their proposal was that the United States act immediately

to undertake a ``diplomatic offensive'' consisting of ``new and

enhanced diplomatic and political efforts in Iraq and the region.'' The

recommendation called on the administration to engage the international

community, the Arab League, traditional United States allies in the

Middle East, and all Iraq's bordering neighbors in order to address

regional conflicts and jointly bring stability to Iraq. They advised

the administration to work quickly to convene a regional conference--it

has not happened--which would complement the Iraq Compact undertaken by

the United Nations. We need to embrace the study group's

recommendations on this issue and act now to increase diplomatic

engagement with the international community.

Without a broad political strategy, our military objectives, no

matter what the tactic, will be pursued in vain. These political

elements must be the focus of our plan in Iraq. And that said, I agree

there is a military component here, as well. I want to be very clear

that I do not support a military withdrawal from Iraq nor do I support

disengagement from the Middle East.

As we debate this issue, we must consider our broader national

security interests in the Middle East. We are only focusing on Iraq. We

have to start thinking about the whole greater Middle East area.

Despite one's views about the current situation in Iraq, it is in our

country's vital security interest to pursue a strategy of diplomacy and

military action in the region. To put it simply, the stakes are too

high for us to sit on the sidelines. We must remain active players in

the Middle East to maintain regional stability, to protect vital energy

supplies, and to guarantee peace and security at home.

We have had long-standing economic and military interests in the

Middle East and we were involved in the region long before we decided

to challenge Saddam Hussein for his defiance of the U.N. Security

Council. But today, with conflicts brewing in Iraq, Iran, Lebanon,

between Israel and the Palestinian territories, it is even more

critical we remain steadfast in our commitment. Despite what one might

believe about the President's strategy in Iraq, we cannot confuse

debate over tactics with the nonnegotiable need to remain engaged in

the Middle East.

Currently, the greatest threat to the stability in the Middle East is

the possibility of failure in Iraq which threatens to destabilize the

region and poses a critical national security risk to the United

States. A premature withdrawal from Iraq will signify in essence that

we are abandoning the region in its entirety. Our departure could

greatly damage, if not sever, relationships with key allies, resulting

in dire political and social consequences throughout the world.

The long-term security interests of the United States will be best

served by a peaceful Iraq that can sustain, govern, and defend itself.

That is why we must figure a way forward and why we cannot withdraw

from Iraq.

The National Intelligence Estimate which was just released

underscores the danger of withdrawal, stating succinctly:

They conclude that the immediate withdrawal of United States troops

likely would lead the Iraq security forces to unravel, encourage

neighboring countries to engage openly in the conflict, and lead to

massive civilian casualties and population displacement. It is also

very likely, were the United States to pull out of Iraq prematurely,

al-Qaida would use Iraq as a training ground to plan future attacks,

and this escalation of violence could ultimately prompt Turkey to

launch a military incursion of its own. These are outcomes we cannot

afford to risk.

I will refer to a few of the experts whom I have met or who have

testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in recent

weeks.

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger testified that ``withdrawal

is not an option'' and continued that:

Think of that. It might drive sectarian conflict in Iraq to genocidal

dimensions beyond levels that impelled United States intervention in

the Balkans.

The new Ambassador from Jordan sat next to me at the prayer

breakfast, and we started talking about Iraq and the Middle East. He

told me that if you do not handle this right, we could see a schism

between the Sunni and Shiite that extends from Malaysia to Indonesia.

Another reason I back the Warner resolution is it does not in any way

threaten to reduce or jeopardize critical funding for United States

troops serving in Iraq. In fact, the resolution states explicitly:

A decision to cut funding would be a serious, irreversible mistake.

Last month, this Senate confirmed General Petraeus as the commanding

general of the multinational force in Iraq without a dissenting vote.

He is carrying out the orders of the President. It is critical that

General Petraeus get the resources and equipment he believes are

necessary to complete the mission and keep his forces safe in the

field. I spoke to General Petraeus and I told him to make sure to ask

for what he needs to be successful. He is concerned about receiving the

equipment and other nonmilitary resources he will need to be

successful, such as contributions of the State Department and other

agencies. We cannot send our forces into the field without the

necessary equipment. We did this at the beginning of the war. Our

soldiers were underequipped. It was despicable. It cannot happen again.

We have the resources in this country to ensure that our men and women

have everything they need in combat.

We also must provide the funding to reset the equipment when it comes

home and to keep the Armed Forces from breaking under the strain of the

war. We must ensure that soldiers have the proper training before they

leave and we must fund the mobilization centers and other military

facilities at home so we can undergo the necessary training.

In my State of Ohio, I met this week with the head of the Ohio

National Guard who is now being told he is going to have to train the

troops in Ohio because they do not want to send them someplace else

because they want them trained fast so they can get them to Iraq and

Afghanistan. The fact is, he said:

We have lost 150 Ohioans, 150 in Iraq. In terms of the States, we are

probably two or three in the United States in the number of members

lost. We lost two because humvees rolled over and they were not trained

to drive those humvees. Now they are much heavier than they were

before.

The Warner resolution makes it clear that we must guarantee the

troops what they need when they need it. And the Gregg amendment

underscores the point further. The best exit strategy for United States

troops is a multifaceted and comprehensive strategy focused on creating

an Iraq for the Iraqis. We must focus on training the Iraqi security

forces so the Iraqis can defend and protect themselves. The Iraqi

people must understand they will be given the full responsibility of

defending and rebuilding their country. We must remove any ambiguity in

the minds of Iraqis about our intention and desire to lead and make it

clear we do not want to be there. In fact, they need to understand we

want to bring our troops home and we want to help them develop the

political and military tools necessary to carry on this mission without

us.

Bringing stability to Iraq will require our best minds, our

resources, and our bipartisan cooperation. We need a massive

improvement in interagency coordination, better communication, better

reporting to Congress, and the help of our allies and friends

throughout the region.

This is my responsibility as a Member of Congress, to exercise

oversight and to contribute to our national security. That is why I

support the bipartisan Warner resolution. Again, I am confident that

given the opportunity, over 60 Members of this Senate will support it.

Last but not least, all of us who represent the people of this

country should get down on our knees and ask the Holy Spirit to

enlighten the President and us in our decision making because the impact

of Iraq will not only affect Iraq, the Middle East, and world peace,

but it will impact dramatically the national security of the United

States of America.

I yield the floor.