Mr. President, from the gravity of the terms

with which the senior Senator from Ohio has spoken, I know the Senator

speaks from his heart. This Senator certainly concurs it is of the

utmost importance of the interests of the United States that we are

successful in Iraq because of the threat to the security interests to

our country in that region of the world.

If someone will look at a map, we have the Persian Gulf, and on the

eastern portion of the Persian Gulf is the Strait of Hormuz, which is

only 19 miles wide, through which most of the super oil tankers of the

world have to flow out of the Persian Gulf, or if you are from an Arab

country, the Arabian Gulf into the great oceans of the world to an oil-

thirsty world. That is clearly one interest.

Another interest is clearly the fact that Iran wants to build a

nuclear weapon. What an enormously destabilizing situation that would

be to put in a rogue nation's hands that is not unaccustomed to

peddling things to itchy fingers that like to exact mischief on the

rest of the world. You put a nuclear weapon in those itchy fingers, and

we have a whole new kind of threat to the stability of the civilized

world.

But there are other reasons--the reasons of countries that have been

in enormous strife, countries that have been very favorable to the

United States, as the country of Jordan and all of the internal turmoil

they have. I could go on and on, but there are so many reasons why it

is very necessary that the United States have success in that part of

the world.

But what we are coming down to is a momentous decision tomorrow, at

1:45 p.m., on whether we are going to continue a policy of this

administration of stay-the-course or whether we are going to change

that course. This Senator believes we should change that course and

that the President's decision to put additional troops into Baghdad is

not changing the course, it is more of the course. It is putting more

American lives into a sectarian violence caldron where the temperature

is so high that we see the reports every day of more and more killings.

Now, this violence did not just start. This violence started 1,327

years ago, when, after the death of Mohammed, the prophet, there was a

power play, and his grandson was eliminated as one of the natural heirs

to the Prophet Mohammed, and the power was controlled within the

clerics who had succeeded Mohammed. It was in that grandson's clan that

they then started a resistance born out of revenge, and that then

started the separation of the Shiites from what are today the Sunnis.

And that has happened for 1,327 years. In the midst of that full-scale

civil warfare, this Senator does not believe it is in the interest of

our country to put in an additional 17,500 American lives. This Senator

believes we ought to force the Iraqis to stop killing each other and to

start working out their differences.

Now, at the same time, as recommended by the Iraq study commission,

it is clearly important that we have a vigorous international

diplomatic initiative to engage all the countries in the region to help

bear upon Iraq and that sectarian warfare to get them to try to come to

their senses, to try to start striking peace instead of warfare,

because all of the countries in the region clearly understand that is

in their interest. You take a country such as Saudi Arabia. One of the

worst things in the world would be if Iraq was just completely

enveloped in chaos; the same with Jordan--two of our friends in the

region.

It is in the interests of the United States to conduct this

diplomatic initiative in a way that it has not been done in the last 4

years: engaging people whom we have refused to engage, listening and

learning in the process, instead of always imposing or giving the

perception of imposing ourselves on

everybody else, and at the same time letting the forces that are there

stabilize instead of putting more American lives at risk.

So we come to a momentous decision that will come tomorrow afternoon:

Do we keep the same course or do we start changing the course with new

and fresh ideas, with ideas that have clearly been laid out in the Iraq

study commission? It is the conclusion of this Senator that we ought to

send a very strong message to the White House that the time for

changing the stay-the-course policy is now.