Mr. President, we are confronted with a piece of

legislation introduced by the distinguished Senator from Wisconsin, Mr.

Feingold, which calls for setting forth the global strategy of the

United States to combat and defeat al-Qaida and its affiliates. The

question I guess I would ask is: Where have those who propose a new

strategy been? Have they been paying attention to the good news that

has been coming out of Iraq and Afghanistan when it comes to our

ability and

our successes to combat global terrorism and particularly the threat of

al-Qaida?

I think the legislation that has been proposed is both misguided and

unnecessarily duplicative of the efforts which I will describe here,

which are ongoing, and would literally cause us to snatch defeat from

the jaws of victory.

On a more basic level, I think this legislation misses the point.

Every time I come back to work here in Washington, DC, I almost feel

there is a parallel universe operating here in Washington where some

have voluntarily suspended their powers of disbelief and ignored the

facts that seem to me to be as plain as the nose on your face. But I

think in light of the fact that this legislation has been introduced,

we need to talk about it and provide the American people with the

evidence with which they can make their own decisions about what is

happening with regard to the fight against al-Qaida.

This bill would require the administration to set forth a strategy

for fighting al-Qaida. I do not know what the proponents think we have

been doing since 9/11 but fighting al-Qaida wherever we may find them,

but that is what the bill calls for. Of course, the bill also

conveniently neglects the various strategies we have in place,

including some that are classified which we cannot talk about here on

the floor of the Senate, but which the distinguished Senator from

Wisconsin as a member of the Intelligence Committee knows--because he

is on the Intelligence Committee; he has been briefed in a classified

setting about these strategies--he knows we have a number of strategies

in place, and this proposal seems to act as if nothing has happened,

when that is not the case at all.

I would interject that overall in the operations against al-Qaida, in

Iraq in 2007, we have seen the capture of 8,800 terrorists, while an

additional 2,400 have been killed. Of those we captured or killed, 52

were senior emirs or commanders, 32 were leaders of improvised

explosive device teams, 24 were cell leaders, and 92 were other

facilitators. In other words, we have been effective in going after

high-value targets in Iraq and literally decapitating the leadership of

al-Qaida. That is the reason why al-Qaida is on the run in Iraq and,

yes, even in Afghanistan.

But to recapitulate, the various strategies that are already in place

would seem to be ignored by this legislation. These include the

President's National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, which was

revised by the administration in September of 2006, and which outlines

in a clear and straightforward fashion the strategic vision for the

global war on terror.

Also, there is the President's National Implementation Plan, which

was completed in June of 2006. This document is a classified,

comprehensive plan, so we are not going to talk about it on the floor

in detail. But it provides for the execution of our national

counterterrorism strategy, and it provides a detailed breakdown of

which executive branch agencies are charged with carrying out the

specific tasks and activities as part of that overall strategy.

Now, Congress, as I said, is aware of all these documents. We get

classified briefings. Any Member of Congress who cares enough about it

can go to room 407 here in the Capitol and gain access to them.

Additionally, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is conducting

his own review of the al-Qaida strategy, which will be finished later

this year. So it is a disingenuous and hollow argument, indeed, to say

the administration or this country, the U.S. Government, lacks a

coherent plan to neutralize al-Qaida or that the current strategy for

combating al-Qaida is not working and it needs to be replaced.

The numbers speak for themselves. I am going to go through these in

rather quick order, but I think the numbers speak louder than words.

During the period of May to June 2007, as this chart demonstrates, we

have seen 26 al-Qaida in Iraq leaders captured or killed. They include

some pretty evil characters, people such as Khalil al-Mashhadani, a

senior Iraqi in the al-Qaida-Iraq network. He was a principal

intermediary between al-Qaida senior leadership and Abu Ayyub al-Masri.

He ordered all Iraqi emirs to wear suicide vests--a trend we are still

seeing today--and confirmed in interrogation that al-Qaida lost the al-

Anbar safe havens due to coalition operations and tribal engagements by

the Awakening Groups, which I will talk about in a minute. He was

captured in July and sentenced to death by an Iraqi court this past

September.

We have seen since that time, in July and August, senior terrorists

captured or killed. It simply is not true to suggest that we are

ineffective or not focused on capturing or killing al-Qaida's senior

leadership in Iraq or wherever we may find them in Afghanistan or

elsewhere.

For example, in August, we were successful in capturing the emir of

greater Samarra, the mastermind behind the destruction of the Samarra

mosque in February of 2006, generally credited with unleashing the

ethnic conflict which nearly led to a civil war in Iraq. He operated

the Samarra terrorist network responsible for improvised explosive

devices and vehicle bomb attacks. He orchestrated the Kirkuk courthouse

bombing in June of 2006 that killed 20 and injured more than 100. This

emir of greater Samarra was killed in a targeted raid this past August.

But to remind my colleagues of the kinds of barbaric and evil attacks

these al-Qaida leaders have perpetrated on their own people, by and

large in Iraq, this individual orchestrated the Kirkuk courthouse

bombing in June of 2006. He masterminded a vehicle bomb attack against

the Iraqi Army checkpoint in Samarra in 2006, in which 29 Iraqi

security forces were killed and another 66 injured.

So that is August of 2007. As you can see, the numbers even go up in

September of 2007, with senior terrorists captured or killed. Each one

of these pictures on this chart is a different story: the brown squares

depicting those who have been captured; the red squares indicate those

who have been killed.

Clearly, Iraqi, American, and coalition forces, along with our

allies--the Iraqis who have basically turned state's evidence on al-

Qaida in Iraq have allowed us the intelligence necessary to capture or

kill some of the worst of the worst among al-Qaida in Iraq.

In October of 2007, as you can see, the pace remains a steady one and

a strong one in terms of capturing or killing al-Qaida's leadership.

The fact of the matter is, we could put up a new chart for each month

until this month and last month. The fact is, we are making enormous

progress. So why in the world would this Senate want to change course

and grab defeat from the jaws of victory, when it comes to putting al-

Qaida on the run?

I have to say on a contentious subject such as this, where it seems

as though people have their own version of reality, the best evidence--

and one that is undeniable--is the fact we have not had another

terrorist attack in the United States since September 11, 2001.

While al-Qaida is on the minds of my colleagues, though, this is a

valuable opportunity for us to talk about the fight against al-Qaida as

part of the overall global war on terror. Today, al-Qaida and other

like-minded radical jihadist groups still pose a very real threat to

the safety of America's vital national security interests, both here

and abroad.

These Islamic extremists go under a lot of different names:

Hezbollah, operating in Lebanon and in parts of Iran and Syria; Hamas;

al-Qaida in Iraq; the Taliban--all of which have the common ideology

which allows them somehow to celebrate the murder of innocent civilians

as part of their twisted goals.

Al-Qaida remains active not only in Iraq but worldwide. This is

literally a franchise operation which in an Internet age allows like-

minded radicals to communicate with one another, and through the use of

relatively cheap explosives and human bombs to basically commit terror

all around the world.

It is the existence of this threat that warrants our continued

vigilance and sustained efforts to neutralize them, and Congress must

continue to support our military in defeating al-Qaida on every front.

We have been successful. But it is important to recognize this threat

is not only located in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it is a global threat.

Recently, ADM Mike McConnell, the Director of National Intelligence,

outlined terror attacks prevented in New Jersey and Illinois--that is

right, right

here in the United States of America. He also outlined attacks that

have been prevented abroad in Denmark, Spain, France, Germany, and the

United Kingdom. In the opinion of those who know best--our intelligence

professionals--this enemy and this threat is real. This enemy plans to

attack us, and it is smart, adaptable, and ruthless.

Somehow, some Members of the Senate have been able to convince

themselves against all the evidence that al-Qaida is not present in

Iraq and that if we fought al-Qaida in Afghanistan we would be safe

here at home. The fact is, it is true the Taliban provided safe havens

for al-Qaida in Afghanistan. Al-Qaida has also found a safe haven in

Iraq. But due to the great work of our young men and women in the

military, due to our intelligence professionals, due to the

intelligence we are able to gain from the cooperation of Iraqi citizens

through the Awakening Councils, who have simply gotten fed up with the

barbaric tactics of al-Qaida--the murder, the rape, the torture of

their own people and thus have cooperated now with coalition forces to

root out al-Qaida--we do have al-Qaida on the run in Iraq.

But that is a fragile condition, and a trend we must continue, not

only through the use of allied and coalition forces but through the

rebuilding of the Iraqi police force and military, and encouraging

citizens, such as the Awakening Councils, to come forward and provide

intelligence.

But the fact of the matter is, if the United States of America does

not lead the fight in this global war on terror, more innocent people

will die. There is no other country in the world that is capable as we

are, that has the vital national security interests that we do, to

fight this war.

Again, this parallel universe that some occupy here in Washington,

DC, that allowed them somehow to convince themselves that this threat

is not real, defies the facts. There are those who propose countless

resolutions in the Senate and the Congress to withdraw from Iraq based

on a political or arbitrary timetable, which makes no sense. As the

Iraq Study Group said, we should leave Iraq as soon as possible and

define it not in political terms but in terms of conditions on the

ground, and that is once the Iraqis are able to govern and defend

themselves.

We know that politicians here in Washington have declared the surge a

failure before it even started, but they have had to come to grips with

the fact that you are always in jeopardy when you bet against the men

and women of the U.S. military and our leadership and under the

leadership of people such as GEN David Petraeus and GEN Raymond

Odierno.

We have seen the surge of American troops, along with the increased

capacity of the Iraqis to defend themselves, meet with enormous success

and reverse a trend that was dangerously cascading toward a civil war

and ethnic cleansing. But the fact is that despite the repeated efforts

by some here in Congress who have declared defeat before this new

strategy was even allowed to take hold have now had to deal with the

fact that almost without exception, everyone who goes to Iraq comes

back with the report that our men and women in uniform are being

successful and that the surge is working.

I went with a couple of my colleagues, Senator Isakson and Senator

Coleman, to Iraq in January where we were able to ride, in armored

vehicles, admittedly, to forward operating bases that previously had

been lost to al-Qaida, where refugees had simply abandoned their shops

and their homes given the threat posed to the Iraqi people themselves

from this ruthless enemy. The fact is, people are moving back home.

Shop owners are opening their shops. We were able to taste some of the

bread cooked in a bakery in an area called Ghazaliya outside of Baghdad

that previously could not operate. We went to a local department store

that previously had to be closed and abandoned literally because of the

threat of al-Qaida and looked at some of the wares for sale.

So this debate that continues here in Washington seems to me to be

increasingly out of touch with the reality in Iraq and the clear

evidence that this new tactic, this counterinsurgency tactic being

deployed by General Odierno, General Petraeus, and our men and women in

uniform in Iraq is succeeding. It is because of that success that we

are able to bring back by this summer roughly 40,000 troops to the

loving arms of their families and in answer to the prayers of many

Americans who wish to bring them home but bring them home with honor

and after they have been successful in accomplishing the goals they set

out to do.

Now, because of the evidence of the military effort in Iraq, a

combination of our coalition forces and Iraqis and local citizens

cooperating to get al-Qaida on the run, there are those who said: Well,

OK, the glass is not half full, it is still half empty. Where is the

political reconciliation that is necessary for the Iraqis to govern

themselves?

While progress on the political front has been slower than any of us

might have wished for, we are seeing very positive signs of political

reconciliation. The Iraqi Parliament recently met some major milestones

for success, and these are very important because these are the

evidence of the political reconciliation many of the skeptics have

looked for and pointed out as not having been met. So it is important

to acknowledge the facts.

First, they passed an accountability and justice law--the first major

step in debaathification reform. We know that many of Saddam Hussein's

Baath Party members were excluded from the new Iraq, and this is the

first major step to allow people who do not have blood on their hands,

who weren't part of the leadership of Saddam's Baath Party, responsible

for the murder of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, to allow them to

take their first steps back into governing the new Iraq and

participating in full civic life.

In addition, just a few short weeks ago the Iraq Parliament passed

three other significant pieces of legislation. They set a date for

provincial elections, recognizing, as we do here in Washington, that

not all wisdom emanates from the Nation's Capital, that they believe in

local governance and regional governance, and that is why the

provincial elections are so important as well.

The Iraqi Government or Parliament allotted $48 billion for 2008

spending, meaning that because of increased oil revenue, they were able

to take on more and more of the financial responsibilities of

rebuilding and governing their own country.

Finally, they provided limited amnesty to certain detainees in Iraqi

custody--an important, although difficult, step to try to make sure the

reconciliation occurs on an individual level so that people need not be

permanently cast as outsiders and given nothing but the opportunity to

undermine reconstruction and reconciliation but actually be part of the

solution rather than part of the problem.

The passage of the provincial powers law is one of the 18 benchmarks

for reconciliation in Iraq which were set by the Congress just this

last year.

Despite this concrete evidence of improvement and of meeting

benchmarks for political reconciliation, there are those here in

Congress who have simply ignored those positive steps, not only on the

security front but on the political reconciliation front.

Unfortunately, it seems as if too often our partisan differences seem

to overwhelm facts and common sense and the common interests of all of

us in America in an Iraq that is able to govern and to defend itself

because our shared goal--which is to bring home our troops--is one that

could be met when conditions on the ground permit those troops to come

home without squandering the blood and the treasure that have been

spent in trying to restore democracy to a country that knew nothing

other than the boot heel of a dictator for too many years.

There are so many wonderful stories of success and commitment and

patriotism in Iraq, and I would like to just close on this. I see my

distinguished colleague from Wyoming on the floor, and I want to defer

to him after another few minutes. I want to recognize and honor the

great sacrifice by Texans deployed in harm's way in support of the

global war on terror.

Some of our troops serving in faraway battlefields since 9/11 have

exhibited incredible bravery and heroism in the face of personal

danger, and I wish to share one story of one Texan among

many who has served in Operation Iraqi Freedom. I wish to tell the

story of SGT Omar Hernandez, assigned to Bravo Company, the 1st Cavalry

Division out of Fort Hood, TX.

Sergeant Hernandez has been awarded the Silver Star for exceptional

bravery and gallantry in action against an enemy. He did this while

serving as a team leader on a foot patrol in Baghdad. His patrol

consisted of a squad of American soldiers, an interpreter, and eight

Iraqi national policemen. Their mission, as is critical to the

counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq, was to secure the population, to

make them feel safe. They moved from house to house on crowded Baghdad

streets interviewing the local population as part of their job.

During the course of one interview, though, Sergeant Hernandez and

the Iraqi police accompanying him were moving to security positions on

the outside of a home when they were suddenly engaged by several well-

aimed bursts of machine gun fire from the south. Sergeant Hernandez

immediately identified the enemy's location and returned fire,

simultaneously instructing the Iraqi police to follow his lead. A

second burst of well-aimed fire erupted from the enemy's position,

wounding all three members of the team. Sergeant Hernandez himself

sustained a gunshot wound to his right thigh. Both Iraqi police

sustained serious injuries, immobilizing both of them.

Not realizing the severity of their wounds, Sergeant Hernandez

ordered the Iraqi policemen to follow him to a covered position behind

a cement wall. As he continued to engage the enemy, Sergeant Hernandez

realized that the Iraqi police were too badly injured to reach cover on

their own. Seeing that these Iraqi policemen were stuck in the enemy's

direct line of fire, Sergeant Hernandez went above and beyond the call

of duty, risking his own life by running under direct fire to pull

these Iraqi policemen to safety. Without covering fire, Sergeant

Hernandez left his covered position--not once but twice--to move these

wounded Iraqi policemen to a safer position. He did all of this despite

the danger to himself and having a gunshot wound to his leg. Despite

his injuries and despite the continued barrage of enemy fire, Sergeant

Hernandez continued to fire on the enemy position. It was only after he

was certain that the threat was eliminated that he finally allowed a

squad mate to treat his wounds.

Sergeant Hernandez is just one of many brave men and women who wear

the uniform of the U.S. military who are serving nobly in Iraq and

Afghanistan. While there is no doubt that his courage and strength were

extraordinary, in some ways this is a typical sort of story of the

bravery of our men and women in uniform. It should be clear that

Sergeant Hernandez is representative of the quality and character of

our military men and women.

I think this also tells a story of the relationship that exists

between our soldiers and Iraq security forces. They fight shoulder to

shoulder. They fight and sacrifice together to make their country a

better place so that peace and stability might come to Iraq and so that

the forces of terror and extremism that wish America and our allies

harm will find no sanctuary in that country.

Sergeant Hernandez, thankfully, has now recovered from his wounds and

is stationed at Fort Bliss out in El Paso, TX. He has a 17-month-old

boy and has been married to his wife Jennifer Kay for 3 years.

Sergeant Hernandez, it is worth noting, was on his third tour in

Iraq. These young men and women and their incredible families are our

most precious national asset. The tremendous sacrifices they make and

have made over these last years ought to leave us with awe-struck

silence. Think of what these men and women have invested in this war in

terms of their sweat, their blood, tears and effort. What message would

we be sending to these brave men and women when we tell them to come

home when victory sits on the horizon?

Sergeant Hernandez wouldn't abandon his colleagues in the Iraqi

National Police force, but there are some here in Washington--a world

away--who want to ask him and all of our troops to abandon the Iraqis

and come home before the job is done.

Those who have been clamoring for troop withdrawals for months upon

months, regardless of the news from Iraq, all the while extolling the

virtues of our military, I think have been telling only half the story.

Yet, at the same time, they refuse to pass the critical funding,

intelligence capabilities such as the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance

Act reauthorization bill which sits over in the House of

Representatives and which, because of the failure to act by Speaker

Pelosi and the leadership in the House, has left our intelligence

authorities deaf to new terrorist targets that, if detected, would

likely detour and defeat attacks against American citizens, both here

and abroad.

Mr. President, the American people often accuse politicians of saying

one thing and doing another. But this is a clear case. Service members

such as Sergeant Hernandez deserve not only our words but our

unmitigated support.

I think our task is clear and that is to let our men and women in

uniform do the job they have volunteered to do and which they are so

ably performing. We ought to do nothing to deter or impede or obstruct

their success, especially when success appears to be so much more

clearly on the horizon than a few short months ago. But as these charts

have indicated, we are having tremendous success in taking down al-

Qaida--those who celebrate the murder of innocent civilians in pursuit

of their own twisted goals. The last thing we need to do is to pass

legislation that would literally draw defeat from the jaws of victory.

I yield the floor.