Mr. President, I rise this morning to speak about S.J.

Res. 9 and the consequences of failure in Iraq.

I want to begin by reviewing just how Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida

see themselves achieving ultimate victory in Iraq.

You don't have to be a serious student of history to realize that as

of late, America has not exactly demonstrated the kind of collective

will necessary to successfully complete military missions abroad.

As a nation, it seems easy, maybe too easy, to commit ourselves,

through our military, into foreign lands in an attempt to accomplish

what we believe is right, either to protect our vital national

interests or to free a people from bondage, or in the case of Iraq to

try to accomplish both.

Whatever the reason for committing ourselves to a noble cause

overseas, America ventures into another country with only the best of

intentions, and for a while the American people and her politicians

overwhelmingly support our military and its mission.

Then, when we see that victory is not as easy or as immediate as we

had initially hoped, we start down a road of self doubt. We convince

ourselves that our military mission was probably not all that important

in the first place. We somehow twist our values to accommodate an

opinion that our military expedition is not worth the effort we need to

expend in order to be successful. We recoil once the realization hits

us that lives and treasure are the ``coin of the realm'' when it comes

to using our military to ensure our continued national security. And

for too long our adversaries have witnessed this reluctance, this lack

of will, to finish the task at hand. In 1982, America deployed her

military to separate warring factions in Lebanon. We went in with only

the best of intentions. People were being killed and it was up to us to

``do something'' about it.

Then, on October 23, 1983, two truck bombs detonated in buildings

housing American forces in downtown Beirut. Two hundred forty-one U.S.

marines, sailors, and soldiers lost their lives that day. Six months

later, America had had enough and we were out of Beirut.

The Lebanese civil war would rage on for another decade, and during

that time countless Lebanese, Palestinians, and Israelis would suffer

as a result of our abdication of responsibility.

As had always been the case before, our adversaries did not pursue us

back to our shores to do us harm. But they did observe and they did

note that the American public, led by her elected officials took the

easy way out and departed before completing our intended mission.

In 1993, the United States once again sought to ``do something'' to

end a humanitarian crisis that was taking place on the African

continent. In a country with no functioning central government,

warlords ruled their individual pieces of territory within Somalia as

personal fiefdoms.

The Somali people were fodder as the warlords battled each other for

control of land and resources. People were being killed. If they were

not being killed by bullets, they were being starved to death.

Although the situation in Somalia did not directly affect our

national security, American leaders at that time answered the call to

``do something'' to alleviate the human suffering Americans were

witnessing nightly as part of their television news shows and reading

in the daily editorial columns of most big city newspapers.

Our leaders once again answered the call by sending our young men and

women in uniform to a foreign land to ``fix things.'' Soon, our

military had its mission expanded beyond providing humanitarian

assistance.

Part of this new mission involved capturing and/or killing the Somali

warlords responsible for the pain inflicted on their fellow citizens.

As part of this new mission, Army Rangers conducted an assault on

Somali forces in what has come to be known as the ``Black Hawk Down''

incident.

Here, two Black Hawk helicopters were shot down and 19 of our Rangers

killed. In the days following, film footage was broadcast over and over

again on television that showed the lifeless bodies of our soldiers

being desecrated as they were dragged through the streets.

This footage both shocked and humbled us. The support for our mission

to do good things in Somalia quickly evaporated. The costs had become

too great to bear. It was no longer that important to do the right

thing and we subsequently withdrew our forces from the region.

Once again, our adversaries watched as the world's superpower

retreated from the fight. Today, Somalia continues to flounder as a

failed state and a haven for Islamic radicalism on the eastern coast of

Africa.

In a 1998 interview with ABC's John Miller, Osama bin Laden said that

the Clinton administration's decision to withdraw from Somalia had

emboldened his burgeoning al-Qaida force and encouraged him to plan new

attacks.

``Our people realize[d] more than before that the American soldier is

a paper tiger that run[s] in defeat after a few blows,'' the terror

chief recalled. ``America forgot all about the hoopla and media

propaganda and left dragging their corpses and their shameful defeat.''

And those attacks promised by bin Laden did come.

On August 7, 1998, al-Qaida decided to test our mettle by

simultaneously bombing our Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, and in the

process killed 257 people and wounded over 4,000.

Our tepid response once again gave Osama bin Laden comfort.

Since the Clinton administration had chosen to treat terrorist

attacks as law enforcement matters, America sought to prosecute in our

courts those responsible. Osama bin Laden was soon placed atop the

FBI's Ten Most Wanted List.

Along with the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the 1996 Khobar

Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia, and the 2000 attack on the USS Cole in

Yemen, the Embassy bombing were two of the major anti-American

terrorist attacks that preceded 9/11.

The United States responded to the Embassy attacks by freezing

financial

assets of related parties and by firing some missiles into al-Qaida

training camps in Afghanistan.

The attack in Afghanistan destroyed some physical targets. However,

the operation did not accomplish the destruction of bin Laden and his

operatives and did not lead to any significant changes in the al-Qaida

network and leadership.

Al-Qaida grew bolder, stronger, and more capable as we sat on our

hands.

And so, here we are today, facing an embolden enemy bent on our

destruction who has convinced himself that he possesses the will to

break our spirit. He has done it before and he is convinced he can do

it again this time.

The sad part about all this is that Osama bin Laden may very well be

right this time.

Today we stand here debating a resolution of appeasement that

directly affects our military strategy in Iraq and, by default, our

overall national security for years to come.

This resolution calls for imposing an artificial timeline to withdraw

our troops from Iraq, regardless of the conditions on the ground or the

consequences of defeat; a defeat that will surely be added to what is

unfortunately a growing list of American humiliations.

I agree with the President's assessment that this legislation before

us would hobble American commanders in the field and substantially

endanger America's strategic objective of a unified federal democratic

Iraq that can govern, defend, and sustain itself and be an ally in the

war against Islamic fascism.

The unintended consequence of this resolution is to bring to reality

Osama bin Laden's vision for Iraq; that after 4 years of fighting in

Iraq the U.S. Congress loses its will to fight. We precipitously

withdraw our forces and leave the fledgling Iraqi government to fend

for itself; Sunni and Shia factions rip the nation apart at a scale

previously unimaginable. There is a mass exodus of refugees out of

Iraq, and no mechanism in place to deal with them. Iran, Syria, Saudi

Arabia and other states in the region feel the need to get involved.

This is a terrible scenario, but it is not the worst of scenarios.

Bin Laden's nightmare vision also involves a chaotic Iraq with Sunni

dominated areas like al-Anbar Province becoming a safe haven from which

al-Qaida can launch attacks against the United States.

And we could see the Shiite dominated areas, with the help of Iran,

and its own oil wealth, be used as a terrorist breeding ground, as

well.

Make no mistake. The Iraqi situation is vastly different from Beirut,

different from Somalia, and, different from the bombing of our African

Embassies.

Iraq has consequences that will surely be felt here at home and

around the world. If we leave Iraq before the job is done, as surely as

night follows day, the terrorists will follow us home.

I believe this.

We will be sorry and we will regret having once again left unfinished

our national security obligations. But by then it will be too late for

regrets.

We will find that as strong and powerful and compassionate as we

think we are, we cannot ``unring'' the bell. The damage will have been

done.

Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida followers are convinced that America

is weak and decadent and they can succeed in grinding down our resolve

and forcing us to retreat.

Osama bin Laden has openly said: America does not have the stomach to

stay in the fight.

He is a murderer. He is a fanatic. He is an Islamic fascist. He is

determined to destroy us and our way of life.

Let us resolve today not to also make him a prognosticator of things

to come.

I urge my colleagues to reject this misguided legislation. We cannot

afford to leave this fight at this time. For the sake of America's

future, we cannot afford to fail.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.