Madam President, we are debating a serious proposal with

respect to the future of our involvement in Iraq and the future of Iraq

and, indeed, that region of the world. I believe the proposal Senator

Harry Reid of Nevada advanced is a sensible way to begin to change our

policy, so it can be sustained over time and it can lead to a

successful termination of our operations in Iraq but, more importantly,

give the Iraqis the opportunity to establish a stable government in a

very difficult part of the world.

The elements of the proposal that Senator Reid has advanced, are

right on target. First, to define the mission in a way that they can be

fully supported by the United States and also that they are congruent

with our best interests in the region and the world. Next, obviously,

is force protection. We have to be able to assure our forces that they

can protect themselves at all times. Third, to continue to develop the

Iraqi security forces--not just to put guns in their hands but to

develop their capacity to do other things, such as civil affairs,

intelligence operations, those critical military skills that will allow

them to be an effective force in their country, to bring not just

stability but a sense of competence, coherence to the operation of

their Government.

The next mission is the constant attention to counterterrorism. This

is a mission that I believe transcends every border in the world.

Wherever there are those elements that are actively plotting to attack

us or our allies, we should be prepared, together with local

authorities, if they are cooperative, to take these elements out very

dramatically, preemptively. That is essentially what we did in Somalia,

without the presence of hundreds of thousands of American troops in

Somalia. But we had the special operations capacity, intelligence, and

the cooperation of local parties so we could do that.

Those are the three critical missions I believe we have in Iraq that

will be longer term. But I think, also, when recognizing those

missions, we can begin to recognize and begin to redeploy our combat

brigades that are there. They are essentially now engaged in a civil

war, a sectarian battle between the Sunnis and Shia in Baghdad, but not

just there. These forces we have to begin to redeploy away from Iraq.

Initially, they could be redeployed within the country, to adjacent

countries, and at some time back to their home stations. I think this

is the wisest course.

I hope, as the legislation suggests, we could at least have as a goal

March of 2008 for the redeployment of these combat brigades,

understanding that these residual missions--force protection, training

Iraqi security forces, and counterterrorism--will endure. That is a

wise policy that is consistent with our national security objectives

and also consistent with our ability and the ability of the American

people to sustain these efforts over many months.

The continued course of simply adding more troops and hoping for the

best, which is the President's strategy, is not going to work. More

importantly, I cannot see it being sustained indefinitely by the

American people or supported by a terribly overstretched military

force, particularly our Army and Marine Corps.

This whole approach to Iraq, I believe, from the very beginning, was

a flawed strategy. It disregarded fundamental aspects of any coherent

strategy--identify the most serious threat and apply adequate, very

robust resources to the threat. Iraq wasn't the most serious threat in

that region. Iran is much more powerful and much more potentially

dangerous and, also, at that juncture, the most serious threat, and

still lingering are the international terror cells.

But this administration, against my judgment, entered into this

conflict in Iraq. Not only did they have a flawed strategy, but the

execution has been horrific, incompetent. Today, we are left with very

few good choices. One of the most revealing aspects of why the

strategic decisions made by the administration were so faulty was given

a few weeks ago when I asked Admiral

McConnell, the Director of National Intelligence: What is the most

likely source of an attack on the United States, groups in Iraq or

groups in Pakistan? His answer, without any delay, immediately, was:

``Pakistan, of course.'' So we have invested billions and billions of

dollars, 140,000-plus troops, over 3,000 Americans killed in action,

many more seriously wounded, and yesterday, the highest intelligence

official in the country says the most serious potential threat to our

homeland, an existential attack on the order of 9/11, is from our ally

Pakistan. That is because, once we focused on Iraq, we took our focus

off Afghanistan and Pakistan. We have allowed the Taliban to

rehabilitate itself. The Pakistanis have been unable to deny a safe

haven to bin Laden, Zawihiri, and other key elements of al-Qaida's

leadership who are not only surviving but beginning to reorganize and

reassert themselves as directors or aspirers or at least coconspirators

with other terror groups around the world. That is a stunning

indictment of the strategy that this administration has unveiled.

There are other costs to this strategy. You will recall the ``axis of

evil.'' The President boldly announced that it was Iraq, North Korea,

and Iran. Well, frankly, after ignoring the North Koreans for many

years, now the administration is seeking to cut a deal with them with

respect to their nuclear weapons. But this is a much worse deal than

the administration had when it stepped into office. In 2000, their

plutonium was capped by international inspectors on the ground. But

through a series of miscues, the administration allowed the North

Koreans to take away their plutonium, create up to 10 nuclear devices,

we think, test long-range missiles and, in a shocking act, detonate a

nuclear device, becoming part of the nuclear club. Now we are offering

them essentially the same terms that could have been had, without all

this damage, many years ago.

With respect to Iran, we know one of the consequences, one of the

costs of our operations in Iraq is that Iran is in a much more secure

strategic position today. They have colleagues and cohorts who are

integral parts of the Government in Baghdad. The people we rely on, the

Maliki Government, has huge support from people who have spent years,

who have fought alongside the Iranians against the Iraqis. Yet we are

supporting, as we must, the Maliki Government. But we should all

recognize the huge influence Iran has today as a result of this

strategy.

Now, these costs are strategic costs, but there are some obvious

costs in terms of dollars and cents. We are spending in Iraq about $8.4

billion a month. That level of effort is difficult to sustain. In

Afghanistan, we are spending less but still significant dollars. All

these costs are being funded from the supplemental. We are borrowing

the money from the next generation of Americans to pay for these

efforts.

The President already set up another supplemental request that will

be pending in a few days. It includes $93 billion for operations in

Iraq and Afghanistan. It will bring the total for this fiscal year--

what was in the original budget, together with the supplemental--to

$145 billion. We will likely see totals such as that in succeeding

years.

In the 5 years the United States has been engaged in Iraq and

Afghanistan--Iraq particularly--we have spent about $530 billion. That

is a huge sum of money. That is very difficult to sustain. We can also

see the cost in terms of supplying the Army. We have a situation where

units are without equipment. Our National Guard is in disarray. Now we

are going to, once again, put a huge demand on our military forces to

support this escalation. It has been suggested to me that, shortly,

upward of nine brigades of National Guard and Reserve forces will be

notified for redeployment to Iraq and Afghanistan. Once again, our

citizen soldiers will be taken from their homes and sent overseas. When

they go this time, they will not have quite the same equipment as they

did the last time because National Guard equipment is in disrepair,

even worse than the regular forces. Their training will likely not be

as authentic because of the difficulty in getting out to the national

training centers. They might do most of the training at their home

stations. We are beginning to see this accumulation of costs reflected

in many ways.

A few days ago, the Boston Globe published a story in which it showed

that because of the retirement and resignations of captains in the

Army, senior NCOs in the Army, promotion rates have been going up

astronomically to fill these vacancies. That is probably the worst

potential trend for any military force, because without those capable

company grade leaders, we will not be able to assure the American

public we have the same level of professional skill that we have today.

I believe, for all these reasons, the resolution proposed by Senator

Harry Reid is the right course of action. But there will be an

alternative approach, and that is a proposal by Senator Gregg with

respect to funding. A few points can be made about that. The Gregg

resolution misinterprets the Constitution by saying the Congress's only

role is simply to rubberstamp what the President does--or worst case,

they can only take funds away. That is not the case at all.

As I mentioned on the floor yesterday, way back in 1799, the Supreme

Court of the United States clearly said that Congress had the right to

make decisions with respect to national policy involving foreign

affairs. In fact, their decision essentially said the Congress could

pass a law that would allow the President to stop ships going into

certain ports but not leaving certain ports.

Many of my colleagues on the other side came down and talked about us

micromanaging. That is micromanaging. It is constitutionally

permissible, perhaps, but it is not something we will do. It is not

something we would want to do. We want to give the President the latter

two that he needs but for missions that are consistent with our

national security.

Under the Gregg resolution's interpretation of the Constitution,

Congress's only responsibility seems to be to fund whatever the

President asks.

That I don't think is appropriate constitutionally or with respect to

our obligations as thoughtful participants in the policy process along

with the President.

Senator Murray will offer an alternative, and that alternative

strongly supports our troops but also properly interprets the

Constitution by stating the President and the Congress have shared

responsibilities for the decisions involving our Armed Forces.

I suspect if you took the Gregg logic to the extreme, if the

President sent up a funding bill and we thought it was inadequate, then

I suspect we couldn't do anything because, after all, all we can do is

either agree with the President or cut off the funds. That is not the

case at all.

I can recall the President sending up to the Senate budgets that did

not have enough resources for armored humvees, body armor, et cetera.

It was this Congress that put more money in because we have a role when

it comes to funding the operations of the military.

When it comes to Presidential policy, it is not simply accepting it

or taking away the money; it is altering that policy if it is wrong, it

is redefining missions, and it is fully resourcing those missions which

are the product of this interaction between the President and the

Congress.

A quote from Senator Murray's resolution:

That I think is a much more accurate, appropriate, and sensible

approach to the issue of shared responsibility.

In addition, the Murray resolution makes it clear that the

Constitution gives Congress the responsibility to take actions that

help our troops and our veterans. We have had a lot of talk about not

funding the troops. But wait a second, it was the President who sent in

forces without a plan. It was the President who sent in forces without

adequate armored humvees. It was the President who sent in forces

without body armor. It was the President and his Department of Defense

who weren't aware of the travesties that were taking place at Walter

Reed when it comes to veterans. It is the President's Veterans

Administration that refused a

few years ago to ask for adequate money for the Veterans Administration

hospitals because of the new demand from veterans.

If anyone over the last several years failed to fund the troops

properly, it is the President. So our concerns should be directed at

his failures to fund the troops rather than that of Congress.

This is a collaborative process that both the White House and the

Congress have to ensure our forces have the resources they need, but we

also have to make sure they are performing the missions most important

to the United States. By endorsing the Murray resolution, we are

sending a clear message of our joint responsibility to fully fund our

soldiers in the field, and by supporting Majority Leader Reid's

resolution, we are sending a signal that the right policy, phased

redeployment, carefully defined missions, providing a stable regional

approach to Iraq and, in the long term, redeploying troops so we can

face with more flexibility the challenges of a North Korea, of an Iran,

of places such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and places perhaps at this

moment we are not aware of but will suddenly burst onto the front page

because of the presence of terrorists or other destabilizing

activities.

I urge strong support of the resolution supported by Majority Leader

Reid and the resolution supported by Senator Murray.

I yield the floor.