Madam President, there is an old joke about the definition

of retreat, which is a strategic withdrawal. I note that is the phrase

used in the resolution, S.J. Res. 9, to describe the process of leaving

Iraq. The language effectively is: ``The President shall commence the

phased redeployment of United States forces from Iraq not later than

120 days,'' and then says:

Except for the limited purposes of protecting forces, training Iraqi

forces, and conducting targeted counterterrorism operations.

That is a very bad idea. We shouldn't be playing politics with this

war, and we shouldn't be trying to micromanage the war from Congress.

But setting specific dates by which the commanders are to make certain

decisions, including how troops are deployed, is clearly micromanaging

the war effort.

The fact there have been 17 resolutions--I believe this is the 17th

resolution--on the Democratic side of the Congress, and the fact that

none of those other 16 were adopted I think demonstrates the confusion

on the other side as to what exactly ought to be done and the

differences of opinion by Members on the other side of the aisle.

Thank goodness we didn't adopt any of the other 16, and we shouldn't

adopt this one either. This one is particularly pernicious. It actually

begins the withdrawal. It sets a date, ``shall commence the

phased redeployment . . . not later than 120 days.

Then it uses a goal of completing that withdrawal by March 31, 2008.

Some have tried to hide behind the word ``goal.'' I think Senator

Feingold said it right, however, on March 8 of this year when he said:

It didn't always used to be this way. A lot of our Democratic

colleagues understood that setting timetables and deadlines was

absolutely the wrong thing to do.

The distinguished majority leader, for example, said:

Another one of the supporters of the resolution said 2 days ago:

Another cosponsor of the resolution said 3 days ago:

One of the most thoughtful people in the Senate on matters of foreign

policy has spoken a lot on this issue, and I think what he said a

couple of years ago makes a lot of sense. This is the distinguished

chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. He was talking about the

options. He said:

Recently, the distinguished chairman said this, unfortunately:

As I said, it used to be that most Senators understood that setting a

timetable in a war, a date for withdrawal was a very bad idea, not just

because it tried to micromanage the conduct of the war from the

Congress but because it signaled to the enemy precisely what the enemy

had to do, to wait us out and then prevail in the conflict.

That is precisely what this resolution does and is the key reason why

every Senator should be voting against this resolution and why those

who spoke against a timetable before should remember what they said and

the wisdom of those words and follow that same advice today.

This is especially pernicious because at the very time this

resolution is being adopted, there continues to be news from Iraq that

suggests the new strategy, the Petraeus plan, is actually beginning to

work. Nobody is claiming any victory. There are going to be bad days as

well as good.

I ask unanimous consent at the close of my remarks to print in the

Record an article from the Associated Press in my hometown newspaper:

``Baghdad's terror death counts are falling.''

Madam President, the article points out the fact that the

death squad deaths are falling substantially, the militia activity is

down substantially. While our commanders there are being cautious about

declaring the operation a success, nonetheless, there are many

different descriptions of events happening in Iraq that give us a lot

of hope.

I was there a couple of weeks ago, and our commanders and Iraqis both

were cautiously optimistic this would work.

The point is, at the very time the new plan is underway and it seems

to at least show early signs of success, why would we want to declare

it a failure and start the process of withdrawing at the very time

these additional troops seem to be making a difference?

One of the chairmen of the Baker-Hamilton study commission, former

Democratic Congressman Lee Hamilton, was testifying before the Congress

about a month ago. He said we should give this plan a chance. We should

give it a chance to succeed. That is exactly what we ought to do. We

start by rejecting the resolution that is pending because it

micromanages the war and sends a horrible signal.

We also try to support the troops by adopting as quickly as possible

a supplemental appropriations bill that funds this effort without tying

the strings of our commanders and without imposing so many other

conditions that the President is constrained to veto it. We have to get

that funding to our troops as soon as possible. That is the other

message the commanders on the ground, both in Kuwait and Iraq, gave to

me when we were there. They said: Please adopt the supplemental

appropriations bill without strings.

I urge my colleagues to vote against the resolution when it comes up

for a vote later this afternoon.