Madam President, I thank the Senator from Oklahoma for

the time for debate.

I thank my colleague from Delaware, whom I enjoyed listening to and

with whom I enjoyed serving on the Foreign Relations Committee.

I say at the outset, I have been endorsing and speaking often around

the country about this notion of a federated system in Iraq, of the

need for a three-state, one-country solution, with Baghdad as a federal

city, where we have a Sunni area, a Shia area, and a Kurdish region.

I have been in Irbil as well. In the middle of January, I was there.

I agree with his analysis of history. When you look at these

situations, and you take a big military apparatus off the top of a

place such as the former Yugoslavia, or now in Iraq, and then you have

these old, ancient hatreds that sit there, how do you deal with them?

That is why I think this is a political solution that is right. I agree

with my colleague from Delaware about that.

I wish he had not left the floor yet so we could have some discussion

on that point because I think, though, that issue would then bode to

voting against this resolution because what we are going to need to

have is a period of time to get that political machination in place. We

are going to need some time and space for Kurds, Sunnis, and Shias to

be able to talk together, to be able to talk in an environment where

there are not these mass car bombs and assaults and attacks taking

place on a sectarian basis--such as took place in Bosnia--so that you

can be able to allow the political system to work.

These are not mutually exclusive objectives of having a military

apparatus in operation and in place in Iraq while you are pushing

forward a very sensible and probably the only political solution that

can take place, having an area for Sunnis, Shias, and a Kurdish

region--which already exists. I might add this is in the Iraqi

Constitution now. This sort of sectarian division of areas is allowed

in the Iraqi Constitution. They have even taken the first steps of

implementation. The Kurdish area is being operated by the Kurds. The

oil revenues, which are being equally--by the last agreement--divided

up around the country, are the glue to hold this system together.

This can and should take place. I urge the administration to push

this, and even to bring these leaders together in-country or outside of

the country to push this form of political solution. But I would add on

top of that, that form of political solution would then say: Do not

vote for this resolution that sets a timetable under which this must

happen because these are things that are going to take some period of

time. As my colleague from Delaware noted, we have been in Bosnia for

the last 15 years putting this in place and holding this in place.

That is the requirement of this, then, so the passions can calm down,

the sectarian passions can cool. You are going to need a force in place

to see this political solution on through. That is the long-term

objective I think we need to look at, this form he is on track to, but

that would be in opposition to this resolution that sets a timetable.

I respect his discourse and I respect my colleagues on the other side

of the aisle who may look at it differently, but I think we have to

look at recent history to tell us this is a logical way that would take

place.

Iraq is more three groups held together by exterior forces at the

present time--with pressure from Turkey, with pressure from the Gulf

States, with pressure--that is not constructive--from a couple of other

neighbors, particularly Iran and Syria.

I think we need to recognize that political solution that is there,

the exterior forces, and push this political solution in the

environment of a more stable military apparatus and military operation.

This resolution, it seems to me, is clearly not a call for victory.

Therefore, it must be seen as a call for retreat. Even its supporters

do not contend it is a plan for victory. We need to win. They talk

about the problems we face, not the solutions we need. But yet there is

a middle road here, even, of engaging the Senator from Delaware, his

political solution with this military rationale, the military needs

that are going to be there that is still in place in Bosnia and is

going to be in place for some time in Iraq. We will need a military

presence in Iraq for some time to come even to get to that political

solution.

We cannot predict how long that presence will be

necessary or exactly what type of presence will be required. At the

Dayton Accords, did we predict at that point in time it would be for a

period of 5 years and no more? No. We said: We are going to help

provide the stability so the political solution can take place. We did

not put a set date: OK, in 1 year, we will have this few troops; and in

2 years, we will not have any of these types of troops; and in 3 years

we will be out. We did not say that. We said: OK, here is a political

solution, and we are going to help stabilize this militarily for

whatever time necessary to be able to do that.

These solutions need to be brought together, not to be argued

separately. I am not calling for an open-ended commitment to Iraq. I am

suggesting that our commitment be driven by the mission. We must

complete it. We must get this done. We can express opposition to the

surge, which I have certainly done. But after doing so, I think we

should oversee the implementation of it, not to try to undercut it, nor

should we attempt to interrupt a mission just getting underway.

We are looking at this right now. I cannot vote for a plan that would

begin a withdrawal of U.S. troops before the surge forces are even

fully deployed at this point in time. The 4th Brigade of the 1st

Infantry Division, based at Fort Riley, KS, recently arrived in

Baghdad. I do not think it would be wise for us to tell those soldiers

they should prepare to leave Iraq even before they get their gear

unpacked.

Not only do I believe it is inappropriate for us to legislate a

timetable for withdrawal, I also believe it is bad policy for us to do

this in Iraq.

First, supporters claim the resolution continues the fight against

the terrorists by leaving a minimal force in place for counterterrorism

operations. But apparently the terrorists are not getting that message.

Two days ago, one of the al-Qaida leaders in Iraq used a jihadist Web

site to discuss the very resolution we are now debating in the Senate.

He said:

Can there be any clearer evidence that al-Qaida is ready to wait us

out?

In fact, al-Qaida not only approves of a timetable for withdrawal, it

is working feverishly to expedite our departure. In the last few weeks,

al-Qaida bombings have stood out as obstacles to stemming the cycle of

sectarian violence in and around Baghdad. Sunni leaders have become so

tired of al-Qaida violence against their own communities that they are

turning to U.S. forces for protection. A timetable for withdrawal

serves al-Qaida's interests.

For many years now, several of my colleagues on the other side of the

aisle have rejected the idea that Iraq is a part--a central part--of

the war on terrorism. I believe the statement I just read and others by

al-Qaida leaders, the recent al-Qaida-inspired violence, and the Sunnis

rejection of that violence should end this discussion. Iraq is

unquestionably a key front in the war on terror, and it is essential we

prevail against the terrorists in Iraq. If my colleagues are serious

about fighting the war on terror, they should frustrate al-Qaida by

voting against--against--this resolution.