Mr. President, there is a lot of emotion in the Congress

today, as there is in the country, on this issue. There is a lot of

rhetoric flying back and forth. Some of it is inaccurate. The first

thing we need to say is that this is not an issue of the Congress

denying anything to the people of the Armed Forces. We are exercising

our constitutional power to appropriate. We are sending the President a

$100 billion check. If he chooses not to cash that check, it is up to

him to come up with the reasons why, not us.

There is also a lot of rhetoric going around over the past couple of

days about defeatism and surrender and accusations of betraying the

troops. We need to calm down a bit. There is no one in this Congress

who wants anything more than to support those people who have been put

into harm's way. I believe people should be very careful on this floor

to discuss political motivations of our military which reflect very

closely the political views of the country at large. Poll after poll

shows that.

In respect to accusations about defeatism and surrender, the question

becomes: Defeat by whom and surrender to whom? We won this war 4 years

ago. The question is, When do we end the occupation? Iraq has been in

turmoil for thousands of years. It will be in turmoil of one kind or

another long after we leave. The U.S. military is not going to change

the societal makeup of Iraq. The Maliki government is not going to

bring peace among Iraq's competing factions without the strong, over

diplomatic cooperation of other countries in the region. Despite the

rhetoric to the contrary, these other countries, all of them, do have

an incentive in seeing a stable Iraq.

This administration claims that our deciding to withdraw from the

internal problems of Iraq will embolden the enemy. Then the question

becomes: Just which enemy? Do they mean the enemy that attacked us on

9/11? We all know that was Osama bin Laden. He not only was not in

Iraq, but he was opposed to the continuation of Saddam Hussein's regime

because it was a secular government.

Do they mean Saddam Hussein, whose ouster was their justification for

beginning this war? Do they mean the remnants of the old regime, which

was their catch phrase when the occupation began? Do they mean al-

Qaida? Let's remember, there were no al-Qaida operations in Iraq before

we invaded, and there will be very little motivation for al-Qaida to

continue in Iraq once we have left. Not only that, but the Iraqis

themselves are quite capable of standing up to al-Qaida without our

help. They do not want al-Qaida in Iraq. That is why they are

cooperating with our forces in Anbar Province right now. And they kept

al-Qaida out of Iraq before we got there. Or do they mean what this

administration continually calls the insurgency, as if there were a

monolithic group of defeatable guerrilla forces? We keep hearing about

this insurgency. Well, which one? The Sunnis? The Shia? Ask yourselves

again, against whom are the insurgents operating? Some are operating

against us. Why? Because we are there and they want us to leave, as a

vast majority of the Iraqis say in poll after poll. Some are operating

against other ethnic factions in Iraq. But to what extent is that the

responsibility of the United States military, to try to end ethnic

rivalries that go back hundreds of years? Or perhaps, as defined by

this administration, we are talking about the factions within the

factions that are busily trying to kill each other, just as the

factions in Lebanon were trying to kill each other more than 20 years

ago, when we put the marines in the middle of that violence.

Some say our withdrawal from Iraq would create chaos in the region. I

have long advocated a withdrawal that should be accomplished under the

umbrella of a strong diplomatic effort that involves regional

cooperation. But I must regrettably say, for those of us who warned

against invading Iraq and decapitating that existing Government, the

chaos the administration is now predicting is exactly the chaos their

invasion has brought us in the first place--instability in the region,

a loss of American prestige, a rise in the influence of Iran, an

increase in terrorist activity.

Mr. President, I wish to say I am very disappointed in some

of the provisions in this report. I must say that candidly. At the same

time, I believe, very strongly, the reservations

I have pale in comparison with my disappointment in the failure of

leadership that has brought us into Iraq in the first place--a

leadership that refuses to find a suitable turning point which will

bring us out.

This administration must be confronted. It must understand the

American people have grown tired of this disastrous, one-dimensional

approach to a crisis that demands innovative answers. It is for that

reason I support this measure.