Mr. President, there will be no victory or defeat for the

United States in Iraq. There will not be a military solution to Iraq.

Iraq belongs to the 25 million Iraqis who live there. It does not

belong to the United States. Iraq is not a prize to be won or lost.

We can help the people of Iraq, as we have been helping them over the

last 4 years, with a tremendous amount of our American blood and

treasure. We have much invested in Iraq. America has strategic

interests in the Middle East. And we will continue to help the people

of Iraq, as we will continue to protect our interests and those of our

allies in the Middle East.

But the future of Iraq, however, will be determined by the Iraqi

people. The future of Iraq will be determined by a political

accommodation by the people in Iraq, which will result in a political

resolution that will be supported by the Iraqi people, its regional

neighbors, and other powers, including the United States.

After 4 years in Iraq, America's policy there should be designed to

gradually pull the United States further away from the day-to-day

responsibilities, those day-to-day responsibilities of defending Iraq

and de facto governance of Iraq, and turning over those

responsibilities to the Iraqis, not escalating--not escalating--our

military involvement in Iraq.

Today, we are headed in the opposite direction. I will not support

sustaining a flawed and failing policy in Iraq.

We are now in our fifth year in an active war in Iraq. Iraq is more

dangerous today than at any time in the last 4 years. And--puzzling--

the administration says, we are making real progress in Iraq. So if we

are making

real progress in Iraq, then why are we putting more and more American

combat troops into Iraq at the same time our allies are leaving or have

already left?

The President's strategy is taking America deeper and deeper into

this quagmire, with no exit strategy.

In January, we were told that 21,500 more U.S. troops would be sent

to Iraq. This month, we learned that as many as 7,000 more U.S. troops,

in addition to the 21,500, would be sent to Iraq. The Congressional

Budget Office has estimated that the President's recent decision to

escalate our military involvement could require as many as 48,000

additional U.S. troops in Iraq.

In January, the administration said progress on the Iraq war would be

measurable by this summer. We have heard that at 6-month intervals for

the last 2 years in oversight committee hearings. But now we are being

told that additional troops could be required in Iraq well into next

year.

This strategy to deepen America's military involvement in Iraq will

not bring a resolution in Iraq. It will only continue to undermine

America's standing in Iraq and the Middle East, complicating and

limiting our diplomatic options, and doing further damage to our

military. And we continue to finance and build the most powerful and

unaccountable mercenary armies in history, like Blackwater.

We cannot continue down a path that is destroying our military and

continuing to place our men and women in uniform in Iraq in the middle

of a civil war.

In February, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Peter

Pace, reported to Congress that there is now--his word--a

``significant'' risk that our military will not be able to respond to

an emerging crisis in another part of the world. Why did he say that?

It is because we are overburdened, overstretched. We are breaking our

force structure--third and fourth tours.

Recently, the inspector general of the Defense Department issued a

report on our National Guard. Our National Guard--our Army National

Guard in America is broken. The Chief of Staff of the Army, General

Schoomaker, has made similar, recent comments in open testimony before

the Senate Armed Services Committee.

It is now time for the Congress to step forward and establish

responsible boundaries and conditions for our continued military

involvement in Iraq. That is our responsibility. Need I remind our

colleagues in this body, the Congress of the United States is a coequal

branch of Government with the President of the United States? We not

only have moral obligations but we have constitutional

responsibilities.

To hear some of my colleagues say we should dispense with this

``frivolous'' debate because the President has threatened a veto--what

a waste of our time--if you logically follow that through, why do we

need a Congress? Why don't we let the President make all the choices,

make all the decisions? There are some, I suspect, in this

administration who would like that, some in this country would like

that. But we tried a monarchy once. It is not suited to America. There

are separations of power. Of course there are. But there are three

coequal branches of Government.

It is now time for the Congress to step forward, after a disastrous 4

years in Iraq. The language in the Senate supplemental bill does this

in a responsible way. The Senate language does not cut off funds. It

does not impose a precipitous withdrawal of troops from Iraq. This

language establishes a limited U.S. military mission in Iraq:

counterterrorism, training Iraqi forces, and protecting U.S. personnel.

That is not new. We have heard that from this administration over the

last 4 years. This was not dreamed up. This idea that somehow you do

not support the troops if you do not continue, in a lemming-like way,

to accept whatever this administration's policy is wrong. That is what

is wrong, and that is dangerous.

This language establishes a limited U.S. military mission in Iraq

that focuses on the things we should be doing, we can be doing. This

new and responsible mission would pull our troops out of the middle of

Iraq's civil war. Is that wrong? Is there something wrong with that--

asking these young men and women to put their lives on the line in the

middle of a civil war in Baghdad, kicking down doors, with a bull's eye

on their back--to pull them out of that? Is that wrong? Does that

somehow display a cavalier attitude toward the support of our troops? I

think not. I think just the opposite.

There is a timeline in the Senate language. But it does not establish

a binding date for U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. Let's get that clear. It

would establish the goal--those are the terms, goal--a goal that U.S.

forces not involved in this more limited military mission be redeployed

by March 2008. Is there something wrong with that? That means March of

2008 is 5 years we will have been there--5 years. We will have done

significant damage to our Marines and our Army and our National Guard

by then.

We have misunderstood, misread, misplanned, and mismanaged our

honorable intentions in Iraq with an arrogant self-delusion reminiscent

of Vietnam. Honorable intentions are not policies or plans or

responsible. It may take many years before there is a cohesive

political center in Iraq. America's options on this point have always

been limited.

I support the President's decision to initiate a new diplomatic

strategy and support a regional diplomatic process on the future of

Iraq that began on March 10 at the regional security conference in

Baghdad. But the President must devote his attention to foster those

efforts. As the Baker-Hamilton report made clear, we must develop a

regional diplomatic strategy to achieve stability in Iraq.

America finds itself in a dangerous and isolated position

in the world. We are perceived as a nation at war with Muslims. This

debilitating and dangerous perception must be reversed as the world

seeks a new center of gravity for this new century. The United States

must begin planning for a phased troop withdrawal from Iraq. The cost

of combat in Iraq in terms of American lives, dollars, and world

standing has been devastating for our country.

The American people are demanding that we develop a bipartisan

consensus for an honorable and responsible exit strategy from Iraq. If

we fail to build a bipartisan foundation for an exit strategy, America

will pay a high price for this blunder--one we will have difficulty

recovering from in the years ahead.

Our actions today in the Congress begin this effort.

Mr. President, I thank you and yield the floor.