Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Mississippi for

yielding.

I rise in support of his amendment and also note that Friday of last

week, March 23, was, in my view, a sad day because it was on that day

the House of Representatives voted to usurp the responsibilities of the

President of the United States as Commander in Chief of the Armed

Forces. Unfortunately, the Democratic majority in the Senate, rather

than reject this ill-conceived and dangerous line of thinking, has

chosen to endorse it.

I believe the phased redeployment language in the supplemental is

wrong. Today, I ask my colleagues to stop and think about the long-term

effects the redeployment language is going to have. This language will

do more than redeploy troops. It will set a precedent that Congress may

interject itself into the military chain of command. This is not a

slippery slope, it is a straight drop to the bottom.

War requires one Commander in Chief. Every civilization, from Greece

to the British Empire, has understood this basic premise, as did our

Founders.

Wars are unpredictable, and they are fluid. Success in any military

conflict requires energy, speed, flexibility, and

adaptability. I thought the Senate understood this, particularly when

we unanimously confirmed General Petraeus to be the commander of forces

in Iraq.

What are our commanders in the field supposed to think? What orders

are they to comply with? Are they going to conduct the surge or are

they going to reorganize their forces to comply with redeploying the

troops? Should we expect our commanders to read their operations orders

or congressional conference reports to determine their priorities?

This effort, led by the Democratic majority, is simply a bad idea,

and I hope my colleagues can see that the short-term gain they seek on

this bill will lead to long-term consequences for the military.

The other reason I oppose the redeployment language is it confuses

strategic policy with foreign policy. Both have the same goal: victory

in Iraq and to bring our troops home. However, that goal is arrived at

by very different means.

Our strategic policy is set by the President and by our military

commanders. Conversely, our foreign policy is set by their diplomatic

counterparts at the State Department. That is why interagency

cooperation is important now more than ever. In order for the U.S.

Government to effectively employ the elements of the national power,

Congress must resist the temptation to intervene and ultimately make

matters worse.

Redeploying our troops from Iraq on a published timeline is not going

to end the war on terrorism. To me, the redeployment language in this

bill is the strategic equivalent of the Maginot line. In World War II,

the French built a wall and the Germans went around it. If we publish

our deployment timeline, then Shia and Sunni insurgents, al-Qaida in

Iraq, and Iranian instigators will all simply wait for us to leave and

then begin their efforts to undo all we have worked for over the past 4

to 5 years.

The conflict we are fighting today is unlike any other we have

fought. That is why I find the Democratic talking points about how the

war in Iraq has lasted longer than this conflict or that conflict to be

so disingenuous. They are right on one point: This is not World War II.

It is not Vietnam. It is Iraq. It is the war on terror, and our efforts

in Iraq cannot be looked at in a vacuum.

Iraq is a front in the war on terror, but it is not the front in the

war on terror, because this war has no front. If you want to know where

the front is in the war on terror, then get in your car and drive 10

minutes over to the Pentagon. That is a front. Go to New York and look

at the gaping holes in the ground. That is a front. Or visit the field

in Pennsylvania where a group of brave passengers forced a plane to the

ground at the expense of their own lives. That is a front. If any of my

colleagues are still wondering where the front is on the war on terror,

you are standing on it.

In order to deal with this phenomenon, in almost every sector of U.S.

security policy we are trying to push America's enemies further away.

Port security is a perfect example. We are putting inspectors in

foreign ports to inspect cargo before it comes to the United States,

and we are allowing the Coast Guard to inspect ships further out at

sea, all for the purpose of putting the enemy farther away from us. Yet

in this instance, this bill seems to invite our enemies into the very

heart of our country. To me, it simply does not make sense.

Our colleagues on the other side also like to note there were no

Iraqis on the planes that attacked us on September 11. Well, there

weren't any Afghanis either. In fact, if we follow this line of

thinking to its logical conclusion about who was on those planes, then

perhaps this Congress should change the 2002 authorization for the use

of force and allow the President to attack Saudi Arabia, because the

majority of the hijackers were Saudis.

Of course, such a line of thinking is ridiculous because this

conflict is not about national identity, it is about ideology. It is

about good versus evil, right versus wrong, freedom versus tyranny, and

hope versus cynicism.

I will concede this administration has not handled Iraq as well as it

could have, but I also believe this debate is more about our national

identity or resolve than our involvement in Iraq.

I still believe that America, for all its faults, is a shining city

on a hill, that our greatest export should be freedom and our greatest

asset being people and ideas; that we are a beacon of hope to those who

toil in the darkness of tyranny and oppression. I also believe if we

pass this legislation, we are saying to the world the United States is

committed to defending freedom only when it is convenient or popular.

That is not the America I know. It is not the America my father, a

World War II fighter pilot, taught me about or the country we should

hope to become.

It is my sincere hope my colleagues will vote to support Senator

Cochran's amendment to remove the troop withdrawal language from this

bill. If we do not, I believe we will be doing more harm than good,

despite the intentions to the contrary.

Mr. President, I yield the remainder of my time.