Mr. President, I strongly oppose the Cochran amendment,

which would strike language in the bill that takes a significant step

toward ending our involvement in the war in Iraq.

The language I am referring to won the support of 48 Senators just a

few weeks ago. I voted for it then and will vote to retain it today.

While it does not go as far or as fast as I would like, it would

effectively end the President's misguided policies in Iraq by

terminating, within 120 days, the current open-ended military mission

in Iraq. At that point, U.S. troops could remain in Iraq for three

specified, narrow purposes. The remainder of our troops would be

redeployed. This provision is binding and it would bring to an end our

current involvement in perhaps the greatest foreign policy mistake in

our country's history.

Some of my colleagues continue to argue that Congress should defer to

the Commander in Chief when it comes to Iraq, that we should give him

the opportunity to change course in Iraq, or that we should allow his

escalation plan the chance to succeed. Those arguments ignore our

congressional responsibilities. Congress authorized this war and it is

in our power to bring it to a close. More importantly, we have not just

the power but the responsibility to end a war that is draining vital

national security resources in pursuit of a goal that cannot be

achieved militarily. The political problems that are driving much of

the insurgency and sectarian strife in Iraq are tragic and important.

They require the attention of U.S. policymakers. They do not require in

fact, they cannot be solved by a massive and indefinite U.S. military

presence in Iraq. Our troops continue to perform heroically in Iraq but

there is no military solution to Iraq's problems.

Some of my colleagues raise the specter of dire consequences if we

redeploy U.S. forces from Iraq. That is precisely why we need a

strategic approach to redeployment, one that addresses ongoing

instability and other threats with our intelligence, diplomatic,

economic and, in a limited manner, military capabilities. Not only is

the continuation of this war not going to end sectarian and insurgent

violence, it puts off the day when we develop a comprehensive strategy

for Iraq that is sustainable and fits squarely within the larger

struggle of fighting al-Qaida.

As long as the President's policies continue, our troops will

continue to put their lives on the line, our constituents will continue

putting billions of their dollars into this war, our military readiness

will continue to erode, our Guard and Reserve members will continue to

face heavy burdens, and our ability to respond to an array of national

security challenges will continue to suffer. From Somalia to

Afghanistan to the ongoing fight against al-Qaida, we face threats and

challenges that require serious attention and resources. Right now, far

too much of both are being spent on a single country. It is this

single-minded and self-defeating policy that needs to end, and it is up

to Congress to do so.

Time and again, the President has made it clear that nothing not the

wishes of the American people, not the advice of military and foreign

policy experts, not the concerns of members of both parties will

dissuade him from pursuing policies in Iraq that are not working. Faced

with a clear mandate from the voters last November, he stalled for

time, before announcing not just a continuation but an escalation of

his policies. Congress cannot wait for the President to change course

we need to change the course ourselves.

The provision that Senator Cochran seeks to strike represents a

change of course. It requires redeployment of our troops while

recognizing that the U.S. has an ongoing role to play in addressing the

terrorist threat in Iraq. While Iraq was not a hot-bed of terrorism

before the President led us to war in that country, al-Qaida and its

allies are trying to use the anger and frustrations unleashed by that

war to their advantage. Like Afghanistan and Somalia, Iraq will need to

be closely monitored to ensure that it does not become a failed state

and breeding ground for terrorism. And we must be prepared to pursue

targeted missions to take out terrorists. But maintaining 140,000 U.S.

troops in Iraq is not the way to defeat al-Qaida. And military

operations of any size will only succeed if they are combined with

other measures including diplomatic, economic and intelligence measures

as part of a comprehensive strategy for defeating the terrorists who

threaten our country. Al-Qaida is not a one-country franchise it is a

global threat that requires a global response.