Mr. President, I would like to first express my profound

appreciation for the majority leader's words today. Senator Reid likes

to say he is not a speaker of eloquence, but I have rarely heard such

eloquence of words on this particular issue. They were from the heart,

they touched me deeply, and also they were humbling. But most

importantly, having the majority leader stand here and bring words to

the floor today, as my colleague, Senator Hagel, and I are attempting

to do, in an attempt to inject a reality, a responsible reality to this

debate that in many cases has been lacking, is greatly gratifying to

me.

I also would like to thank and congratulate my good friend and

colleague, the Senator from Nebraska. I greatly respect his service to

our country. I greatly admire his courage and his willingness to speak

out on this issue over the past several years. I would point out that

he and I began our Government service many years ago as people who had

come back from a different war and decided we would devote a good

portion of our lives to trying to take care of those who had served.

The motivation behind the amendment he and I have worked so

assiduously on over the last couple weeks is that same motivation that

began nearly 30 years ago. I have seen a lot of comments over the past

3 months, some of it accusatory with respect to people who are trying

to bring a different focus to our situation in the Middle East, saying

that the people who are doing this were somehow hurting the troops.

The question becomes, how do you support the troops? What does it

mean to support the troops? Who is really speaking for the troops? We

have a good many Members of this body--and I respect them all--who have

come back from multiple trips to Iraq. They have sat down with the

military leaders who are charged with the responsibility of carrying

out our policies. They have heard in many cases optimistic predictions.

In too many cases, they have come back and basically said: If you want

to do something different, you are affecting the options of the

Commander in Chief, and you are being disloyal to the troops.

Who is really listening to the troops? On the one hand, the people

who have been serving in this war are justifiably proud of their

military service. On the other, they are carrying out the policies of

our political process. If we look at polls--our best way of trying to

figure out how the average military person feels about this war--we

will see they share the same concerns in the aggregate as everyone else

in the country. A little more than a year ago, when I announced for the

Senate, there was a poll of our Active-Duty people actually serving in

Iraq. Seventy-two percent of those people believed the United States

should withdraw from Iraq by the end of last year. This included 70

percent of the Regular Army and 58 percent of the regular Marine Corps.

Our motivation today is to try to put a formula together that will

respect the policies of the United States and truly show the best way

to take care of the troops.

I note with some irony that the bill before us is called an emergency

supplemental appropriation. Beginning the fifth year in this war, we

are now calling it an emergency that we need to bring more money to the

table. Why? There are a lot of different possibilities, but let's start

with this: This has been a war which has been fought without a

strategy. You do not have a strategy unless you can clearly articulate

the end point of your military operations. I have been saying this for

more than 4 years. But what we have had instead of a strategy is the

plan of the week. We have had a lot of flailing around from the

political leadership that has spilled over into the military

leadership--let's try this; let's try that; let's extend our troops;

let's deploy our troops early; let's send them back before they have

had a chance to rest, recuperate, and refurbish. We are seeing now, as

my good friend from Nebraska mentioned, the military cost of that kind

of policy. We are also seeing a human cost. Who pays for this lack of

clarity? The troops pay. They are sacrificing. They are proud to serve

their country, and they can't plan their lives. They have kids being

born, weddings to go to, people to visit, holidays to enjoy--all a part

of the plan when they were deployed.

This amendment goes to that point, the proper utilization of our

military. The first thing that it does is it establishes clearly, as

Senator Hagel and I and others have been saying for a long time, that

the primary U.S. policy objective in Iraq should be a political

solution that can be obtained through increased, concerted regional and

international diplomacy. We have seen the seeds of that over the past

couple of months. We are stating that this should be recognized as our

primary goal.

The second point is that we are putting in, as the Senator from

Nebraska mentioned, legally binding restrictions calling for the

certification of any unit in the U.S. military that is going to be

deployed, that it be fully mission capable. We have a reality check in

this provision. We understand that in terms of heavy equipment, many

units deployed fall onto equipment inside the theater of operations. We

are not requiring that they have that equipment with them when they

first deploy. We also have Presidential waivers in terms of possible

national emergencies that might occur. Other than that, we should have

unit-ready deployments.

The third portion of this amendment goes to extending deployments. We

are basically saying Army units that deploy for a year should come back

in 365 days. Marine units that are deployed for 7 months should come

back at the end of 210 consecutive days with certain, again, realistic

exclusions.

The fourth provision goes to the minimum period between deployments.

You are not going to deploy military units until they have been home at

least the amount of time they previously were deployed. This goes for

individuals as well as units. It is quite possible in today's military

for an individual to come back from deployment and, after a very short

period of time, be backfilled into another unit that is going.

Technically, the unit may have been back here for a year or 7 months,

but the individual has not. That has to stop.

We are also saying in terms of the Guard and Reserve that they need a

one for five. They need to be able to be home for five times the length

of time they have been deployed. On this one-to-one cycle for Active

Forces, the military itself, the Commandant of the Marine Corps has

said they would like to have a two-for-one cycle--for every year you

have been gone, 12 years home. In my experience in the Pentagon, as

Assistant Secretary of Defense and as Secretary of the Navy, we looked

at a two-for-one ratio for our ships, for our troops, a period of time

deployed, a period of time to come back, get reacquainted with your

family, get some down time, and then an equal period of time to

refurbish and get ready to go again. All we are asking for here is a

one-for-one.

If you look at what has happened in the conduct of this war, it has

not been operational demands that have created the situation for our

troops; it has been a lack of proper leadership. There is nothing in

Iraq that would require this sort of chaotic planning. There is no

emergency right now that can justify the unpredictability we have built

into these deployments.

At the right time, when the Senator from Nebraska is able to

negotiate this with the leadership--and I will pursue this as well--we

want a vote. We are working to get a vote.

I urge all of my colleagues to support the amendment.

I yield the floor.