Mr. President, next Tuesday will mark the start of the

fifth year of the war in Iraq. Our Nation has spent almost $400 billion

now in Iraq and is spending an average of almost $9 billion in U.S.

taxpayers' funds per month. More importantly, we have lost almost 3,200

American service men and women and have suffered almost 24,000 wounded.

The resolution before us is aimed at turning the responsibility for

the future of Iraq over to the Iraqis themselves. Last year, we adopted

a resolution which said that calendar year 2006 was going to be a

period of significant transition to full Iraqi sovereignty with Iraqi

security forces taking the lead for the security of a free and

sovereign Iraq, thereby creating the conditions for a phased

redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq. That was over a year ago.

We were supposed to be through a year of significant transition by

now. It has not happened. The only way it is going to happen is if this

Congress makes it happen.

Many of us have long maintained it was necessary that pressure be

placed on the Iraqis to come together politically because only a

political settlement could bring about the end of sectarian violence in

Iraq and the defeat of the insurgents.

I have recounted how Ambassador Khalilzad and even President Bush

have told me a number of statements that many of us have made--that we

should begin to reduce our presence in Iraq--were, indeed, useful

statements, useful in an effort to prod the Iraqis to reach a political

settlement.

Those words--the words of President Bush, Ambassador Khalilzad, and

recently Secretary Rice--words prodding the Iraqis to take

responsibility, telling the Iraqis the open-ended commitment is over,

telling the Iraqis we must begin to reduce our presence in 4 to 6

months are useful words for the Iraqis to hear.

The problem is it is not the President who is speaking those words.

The problem is the administration has not adopted those words as a

matter of policy. Now it is time for Congress to explain to the Iraqis:

It is your country. We cannot save you from yourselves. It is time for

us, the Congress, to tell the Iraqis as a reminder that it is their own

Prime Minister, Mr. Maliki, who acknowledged the following when he said

a few months ago:

A few weeks ago, Ambassador Khalilzad said in an interview on

television that the congressional debate is ``useful in one way. It

does send a message to the Iraqis that the patience of the American

people is running out, and that is helpful to my diplomacy.''

I wish to repeat this because there are a number of Members of this

body and there are a number of members of the administration who have

attacked this debate as somehow or another undermining our troops. It

is quite the opposite. We support our troops when we give them our best

thinking as to how to succeed in Iraq. It is good for our troops to

have a debate in this democracy about whether a course is failing or

succeeding and, if it is not succeeding, to offer our best thoughts as

to how to make it succeed.

Our troops deserve everything we can give them. They haven't gotten

it. They deserve the best equipment. They didn't get it. They deserve

treatment when they come to our hospitals. They didn't get it. They

deserve our best thinking, our honest thoughts as to how we can succeed

in Iraq, how can we change course from a failing course to one which

succeeds.

We know there is no military solution in Iraq, there is only a

political solution, and that must be achieved by the Iraqis themselves.

We cannot save the Iraqis from themselves. It is their country. After 4

years of shedding American blood and American treasure, it is long

overdue that the Iraqi leaders be told, not just by this Congress,

although we alone apparently will do it, but by the administration that

they and they alone have the responsibility, the capability, and the

power to make Iraq a country instead of a place of civil strife.

This resolution we are about to embark upon will end the open-ended

commitment of American military forces that is not working. We must

change this course. Only the Iraqis can save their country, and we will

be helping to force them to do that. It shouldn't be necessary, but it

is. We will be helping to force the Iraqi leaders to save their country

if we step up finally and say: We have been there longer than we were

in World War II. We have been in Iraq longer than we fought the Korean

war. Iraqis leaders, only you, and you alone, can decide: Do you want a

civil war or do you want a nation? We hope you choose a nation.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, after 4 years of fighting and the loss of

almost 3,200 American lives, 24,000 wounded, $350 billion spent on this

war, it is long past time for a new approach in Iraq. Everybody who

participates in this debate wants to maximize our chances of success in

Iraq. Even those of us who voted against going to war and those of us

who have disagreed with how this war has been conducted want to see a

stable Iraq which enhances our own national security.

But continuing the current course and surging along the current

course does not do that. The President's current course of action, of

putting more U.S. military personnel in the middle of a growing civil

war in Iraq, does not enhance our security and it does not maximize the

chances of success.

The President's plan has a fundamental flaw because what is needed in

Iraq is a political solution among the Iraqi leaders, not a military

solution. Our troops perform bravely and brilliantly, but American

military firepower will not end the civil war in Iraq. It has been

apparent for a long time that there is no military solution in Iraq,

that an Iraqi political solution is necessary to end the violence. GEN

Peter Chiarelli, commanding general of

the multinational force in Iraq, said the following in December:

And he continued:

At his confirmation hearing in December, I asked our new Secretary of

Defense, Bob Gates:

Dr. Gates replied:

The Iraq Study Group stated that:

Perhaps most telling was Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki's acknowledgment

recently on this essential point. This is what Iraq's own Prime

Minister said:

The real battle for Baghdad is not a military battle, it is a

political one, and that battle can be resolved only by Iraqi

politicians and not by our military.

So how do we pressure the Iraqi leaders to reach the political

settlement that is essential? We can start by ending our open-ended

commitment to Iraq. The President has changed his rhetoric about ending

our open-ended commitment, but he has not changed his policy. In fact,

he sent the opposite message when he sent more troops to Baghdad.

Our objective in Iraq, and the objective of this resolution, must be

to shift responsibility to the Iraqis, both politically and militarily,

for their future. For that to happen, we must end the open-ended

commitment that has been made by this administration to Iraq of the

presence--without decision by us, leaving it up to the Iraqis for how

long and how many--of American troops.

We must make clear to the Iraqis that their future is in their hands,

not ours. We must make it clear to the Iraqis they must reach a

political settlement among themselves and, if they do not, we cannot

save them from themselves.

As General Abizaid said in November:

General Casey made the same point in early January when he said:

The Iraq Study Group specifically drew the connection between the

importance of ending the open-ended commitment of American troops and

persuading the Iraqis to make political compromises. There is a

connection between the two, the Iraq Study Group said, between ending

the open-ended commitment and getting the Iraqis to resolve their

political differences. Here is the way they put it in the Iraq Study

Group's report:

That is the Iraq Study Group.

Columnist Tom Friedman put it succinctly recently in the New York

Times:

But instead of putting pressure on the Iraqis, the President is

putting his faith in the Iraqis to meet certain benchmarks they have

set for themselves. But look at the track record of the Iraqi

Government in meeting some of the benchmarks and promises it has set

for itself and it has made.

Iraqi President Talibani said in August of 2006 that Iraqi forces

would ``take over security in all Iraqi provinces by the end of 2006.''

That pledge surely has not been kept.

Prime Minister Maliki said last June he would disband the militias

and illegal armed groups as part of his national reconciliation plan,

and in October he set the timetable for disbanding the militias as the

end of 2006. That commitment has not been kept.

The Iraqi Constitutional Review Commission was to present its

recommendations for changes in the constitution to the Council of

Representatives within 4 months of the formation of the Iraqi

Government last May. Well, the commission has yet to formulate any

recommendations.

Prime Minister Maliki put forward a series of reconciliation

milestones to be completed by the end of 2006 or early 2007, including

approval of the provincial election law, approval of a new de-

baathification law, and approval of a new militia law. Not one of those

laws has been enacted.

On January 30, Secretary Rice wrote to me about these benchmarks. She

said the Iraqi Government had adopted a lot of benchmarks, and she

attached those benchmarks to her letter called ``Notional Political

Timeline.''

Here is what she said about the benchmarks attached to her letter:

Then she said:

The posted document shows one benchmark after another, starting in

September 2006, going through March of 2007, and I am going to read

them off.

By September 2006:

By October 2006:

By November 2006:

By December 2006:

By January 2007--this was the timeline--

By February 2007:

By March:

Now, there may have been one or two of those guidelines met. If so, I

am not sure what they are, but I want to at least allow the possibility

that a flag, emblem, and national anthem law was adopted. But of those

perhaps 15 milestones--and a timeline for them--to be adopted by the

Iraqi Presidency, not more than one--but maybe two--of the 15 have been

adopted. And none of the important ones have been adopted.

We are told by Secretary Rice, that was on the Web site of the

President of Iraq. Then suddenly and mysteriously it disappeared from

that Web site a few months ago.

When I asked Secretary Rice--I wrote her a letter asking: You said,

Madam Secretary, this was on the Web site, but it disappeared from the

Web site. Can you find out why? We have not heard back from the

Secretary of State about that problem.

So much for the promises and commitments and milestones of the Iraqi

leadership. They post them on a Web site month by month what these

promises and commitments and milestones and benchmarks are, and then--

poof--they disappear from the Web site, just as though they were not

made. That is the problem with milestones, benchmarks which have no

consequences when they are not met.

The President talks about benchmarks, and yet he has not outlined any

consequences for the Iraqis if they fail to meet these new benchmarks.

I have little hope they will meet benchmarks they lay out unless they

see no alternative. It is time to go beyond the toothless benchmarks

and to make clear to the Iraqi leaders their dawdling must end and that

their nation is in their hands, and we cannot decide for them how to

build a nation, whether to build a nation, or whether they prefer to

have a civil war.

The administration says our debate on this bill would embolden the

enemy. But what that shows is a serious lack of understanding of the

situation we face. Congressional debate over Iraq policy does not

embolden the enemy. The enemy is already emboldened. The enemy is

emboldened by an open-ended presence of western troops in a Muslim

country's capital, which serves as a magnet for extremists and gives a

propaganda club to our enemies.

The enemy is emboldened by an invasion of Iraq without the support of

the international community, and with no plan for a violent aftermath.

The enemy is emboldened by a million and a half Iraqi refugees, with

thousands more being added each day. The enemy is emboldened by a surge

of American troops into a civil war that postpones the day when Iraqi

leaders will take responsibility for their own future.

And now our responsibility as a Congress. What is our responsibility?

What this resolution does is implement our responsibility by working to

make the day when Iraqi leaders take responsibility for their own

nation come sooner rather than later. The most recent intelligence

estimate says ``the current security and political trends in Iraq are

moving in a negative direction.''

Our resolution is the best way to stop the Iraqi leaders from

continuing to fiddle while Baghdad burns. It would seek to pressure the

Iraqi leaders to achieve a political solution by requiring our

President to promptly transition the mission of American forces in Iraq

to protecting United States and coalition personnel and infrastructure,

to training and equipping Iraqi forces, and to conducting targeted

counterterrorism operations.

Our resolution would require the President to begin the phased

redeployment of United States forces from Iraq not later than 120 days

after enactment, with the goal--I emphasize ``goal''--of redeploying

all United States combat forces by March 31, 2008, except for--except

for--those that are needed to carry out the three missions which are

described in the resolution, and which I have just outlined. That goal

and the three limited missions are the same as the goal and the limited

missions recommended by the Iraq Study Group.

Passing this resolution would deliver a cold dose of reality to the

Iraqi leaders and would tell them we are not going to be their security

blanket without end. When they finally understand our military presence

in Iraq is neither permanent nor unconditional, then--and only then--

are they likely to take the political steps necessary to deal with

sectarian violence and to defeat the insurgency.

By shifting responsibility to the Iraqis for their own future and

their own country, this resolution does what is needed the most--it

puts pressure on the Iraqis to reach a political settlement.

As we consider the future of our involvement in Iraq, we must always

be mindful of the price our military and their families are paying as a

result of multiple deployments of units and people to Iraq. We must be

mindful that the lack of attention to Afghanistan and Pakistan has

allowed al-Qaida and the Taliban to regroup and strengthen. We must

also be mindful that our nondeployed forces lack the equipment and

other resources needed to maintain an acceptable level of readiness,

and, as a result, the risk our Nation faces has substantially

increased.

We must be tragically mindful, always, that the pledge to take care

of those courageous soldiers and marines, who have sustained serious

physical and mental injuries in combat, has been broken by this

administration.

In recent days, there have been statements suggesting a debate in

Congress on the war in Iraq is undermining the troops. Just last

Monday, Vice President Cheney said, among other things, that:

Contrast the Vice President's statement with statements Secretary of

Defense Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Pace

made recently on February 7 before the House Armed Services Committee.

Here is what Secretary Gates said:

Here is what General Pace said, and contrast this to what Vice

President Cheney said--how worthy Secretary Gates' statement is--and

listen to how worthy General Pace's statement is compared to the stale

and unworthy comments of the Vice President of the United States about

what this debate signifies.

General Pace:

And then he added:

When I listened to the Vice President and his unworthy remarks, it

reminded me of not only how worthy our troops are and how they are

professional enough to understand what their duty is, but also that

they are loyal Americans to know and understand that it is our duty to

debate this war. For those of us who think it is leading in the wrong

direction and going nowhere, it is on a road to failure, it is our duty

to try to change that course.

Contrast our troops and their honor and their loyalty to the

principles upon which this Nation was founded, reflected, interestingly

enough, in a poll taken of our military by the Military Times. This

poll was printed in the Army Times a few months ago. The question that

was asked of our troops was whether they approve of the President's

handling of the war in Iraq. Forty-two percent of our troops

disapproved of the President's handling of the war in Iraq. Thirty-five

percent of our troops approved of the handling of the war by their

Commander in Chief. They are divided as Americans are divided. We

should not only respect their bravery, we should respect their

intelligence and their commitment to this debate in the Congress. That

is what they are fighting for: that we can debate a mission and we can

debate how to best secure this country so that we can debate how to

best succeed in Iraq.

That is what our troops believe in. That is what they are fighting

for. It is insulting to them. It is insulting to them to say, as the

Vice President of the United States said, that a debate in the United

States Congress as to how best to succeed in Iraq, how best to change

the course in Iraq, somehow or other undermines the troops.

So we have before us an opportunity, an opportunity which can only be

achieved if this debate can advance beyond the motion to proceed. We

will be voting on that motion later on today or tomorrow. I hope that

Senators, regardless of our views on this war, will allow this Senate

to once again debate the direction in Iraq. The last real vote we had

was one that denied us this opportunity to proceed. I hope there will

be enough of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle who will

recognize the importance of this debate to this future--the future of

this country, to the future of this world, perhaps; to the lives of so

many of our gallant, brave troops and their families, and perhaps,

indeed, to the future well-being of this institution because this

institution surely should be about debating issues as transcendently

important as our future in Iraq.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that some correspondence

between myself and Secretary Rice, and Senator McCain and myself with

Secretary Rice be printed in the Record.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in

the Record, as follows: