Mr. President, I appreciate the opportunity to share some

thoughts on what is probably the most important decision the Senate

will make in the war on terror for decades to come, not just for the

next election. I have a framework in my mind about what is going on in

Iraq and how it fits into a global struggle. Quite frankly, I think it

is unshakeable. I am not pursuadable on this issue. I will put my bias

right up front. The outcome of what happens in Iraq is part of an

overall global struggle called the war on terror. That is not just my

view; it is the view of the al-Qaida members who have gone to Iraq to

destabilize this infant democracy.

It is being billed all over the Mideast as the struggle between

moderation and extremism. We have Sunni extremists trying to get back

in power. They reigned during the Saddam era, and some of them do not

want to give up power. They want to destroy this democracy so they can

rule again as a minority within Iraq because they had a taste of it

before--that power--and they do not want to give that up. The Shia

extremists, who are a minority of the Shia community, have a hope to

create a theocracy in Iraq, not be the dominant political party in a

democracy. They have a religious agenda for Iraq very similar to Iran.

Then you have foreign fighters, including al-Qaida, who see a democracy

in Iraq as the biggest threat to their overall agenda.

What we are talking about is withdrawing from a central battlefront

in the war on terror. What would be the consequences of redeploying--

whatever word you would like to use--in the overall effort called the

war on terrorism?

I think it would be the worst signal you could possibly send to the

insurgents, to the extremists, and to al-Qaida members who are involved

in this fight, who are watching this fight. Redeployment means

surrender. If you think we are in the middle of a civil war that is a

hopeless endeavor, cut off funding and get the hell out.

This idea of trying to go somewhere where it is safe for Americans is

folly. If you are in uniform in Iraq, there is no safe place for you.

Wherever we move to, they are coming after us. We have this illusion

that there is a place we can go inside of Iraq or some other country in

the Mideast that will provide safety. I can assure you our enemy is

intent on proving to us there is no safe place for us in the Mideast.

When I say ``us,'' I mean those men and women wearing the uniform.

The goal of the extremists in Iraq--some are limited to the country

of Iraq. Other extremist groups within Iraq have a wider goal. Their

goal is to drive American forces out of the Mideast. So there is no

place, in my opinion, you can redeploy within Iraq that would not be a

signal to the people we are fighting that we are surrendering and

retreating.

This war is about not killing terrorists from an American point of

view alone, it is about empowering moderates. The Bush administration

has made plenty of mistakes. The biggest mistake we made after the fall

of Baghdad was not appreciating how much Saddam Hussein had raped his

own country, how hard it would be to build a democracy out of ashes of

a dictatorship, doing this on the cheap, assuming the best, never

planning for the worst, and not having enough troops on the ground to

provide security, which is essential to democracy.

It is so easy to beat on the Iraqi political leadership. They deserve

to be pushed, and they deserve to be challenged. But one thing I can

tell my colleagues, they represent a better Mideast than the groups

trying to literally kill them. Our goal is not to just destroy

terrorist organizations; it is to empower moderates.

The Democratic Congress is about to trump any mistake Bush has made

by a factor of many. If they, as a Democratic Congress, set in motion a

resolution that would undercut General Petraeus's ability to reinforce

Iraq in a way that makes sense, then they have made a much bigger

mistake than President Bush has ever made. If my colleagues are trying

to pass a resolution that would make it impossible for moderates to

reach political consensus because security is no longer certain, then

my colleagues have made a much greater mistake than President Bush.

Now why not cut off funding? I guess the only reason we are not

cutting off funds is because the American people, through polling, say

that is a bad idea. But I know there are many on the other side who

want to cut funding. To be honest, I respect them immensely; I just

disagree with this idea of taking a middle position that has as its

basis that there is a safe way to redeploy and not affect the outcome

of Iraq. That, to me, is just folly. It is unconstitutionally sound. It

destroys the ability of the commander on the ground, General Petraeus,

to do the job we sent him over there to do. It will be a sign of

weakness to those we are fighting. Moderates will start hedging their

bets. My belief is that the stronger we are in Iraq, the bolder the

moderates

will be. The weaker we become, the more uncertain they will be.

It took us from 1776 to 1789 to write our own Constitution. When the

product was written, women could not vote, and African Americans had no

standing in the law. So I know there are religious problems in Iraq of

a longstanding nature. I know this: Before al-Qaida bombed the Samarra

mosque, the third most holy Shia holy site in Samarra, there had been

generations of Iraqis, Sunnis and Shias, living together,

intermarrying. I do not believe Sunnis and Shias are born to kill each

other.

I do believe, like other places in history, other times in history,

and other places on the planet, people are divided--sometimes by race,

sometimes by religion--and our country needs to come to the aid of

those who want to live together and reject religious bigotry.

The idea of dividing the country based on race, not many people in

this body would say: Yes, that is a good idea, that will bring about

peace, because it is giving in to bigotry. The idea of trying to give

in to religious differences is insurmountable, is giving in to

religious prejudice. I do believe the Iraqis can overcome their

differences because it is in their best interest. But I do believe, if

we do not reinforce this infant democracy at a critical time in its

formation, we are going to lose in Iraq and the war just begins, it

does not end. If you think withdrawing or redeploying ends this war,

then I think you are going to be proven wrong in history.

I know what awaits those who are involved in the surge: more risk,

more blood, and more treasure. On the other end of this surge, my hope

is that we will provide enough security--holding areas previously

cleared--and the Iraqi Government will step to the plate and start

sharing the oil, doing the things politically they need to do to

reconcile their country.

No one believes 21,500 troops are going to solve the problems of

Iraq. Military power has its limitations, but we need to reinforce Iraq

politically, economically, and militarily. The general we have sent to

do the job has told us what he needs. He has a plan to accomplish his

mission. The Congress is undercutting him at every turn.

This is the 17th resolution. I do not know what the magic number is

to find the resolution that fits the political moment, but I can tell

you this: The resolution in Iraq is not about the political moment; it

is about decades to come in the Mideast if we can empower the moderates

who are fighting and dying for their own freedom.

I say firmly and boldly to these Iraqis who have joined the military,

who have joined the police, who are wanting to be judges, to those

political leaders trying to find common ground between the three

factions: You have my admiration and support because I know what it is

like to be challenged in politics, when special interest groups try to

take your job away from you because you will not do what they tell you.

I cannot imagine what it is like to make political decisions knowing

they are trying to kill your family.

I do believe the outcome in Iraq is part of a global struggle and

that we need to reinforce Iraq on all fronts to have a chance, our last

best chance to get this country up and running under democratic

principles.

Talking to the neighbors is a wonderful thing. Somebody needs to be

talking to Iran about their nuclear program and deal with this nut who

is the President of Iran, who goes into the United Nations and says

openly: I would like to wipe Israel off the face of the Earth, and who

is challenging the world openly today that he will not give up his

nuclear ambitions. It is clear to me, and I think anyone else who has

looked at Iran, they are trying to develop a nuclear weapon to change

the balance of power in the Mideast, and they are involved deeply in

Iraq because their biggest nightmare, from the Iranian point of view,

is a stable, functioning democracy. The theocracy in Iran does not have

a shared interest with the United States or the Iraqi people when it

comes to forming a democracy. If we can get them involved to help us

provide security, let's give it a whirl. Let's give it a try. I do not

believe they really have that as their goal.

Syria is trying to undercut this infant democracy called Lebanon.

They are playing hard in Iraq because they are a police state.

I believe that the neighbors, Syria and Iran, are part of a global

challenge to freedom-loving people. They are not the solution; they are

the problem.

Where we find moderates in the Mideast, we need to stand boldly with

them and give them the ability, the best we can, to change the course

of the Mideast. This effort to withdraw and redeploy is the worst

possible signal you could send to moderates or extremists. This is a

war which has religious components to it.

There is one group who has proven they can live together in Iraq in

peace, willing to live with us in peace. There are plenty of moderate

forces throughout the Mideast who want to live on the planet with the

rest of us and have a desire to do so. There is a minority who have

hijacked a great religion, who have no place for us--moderate Muslims,

Jews, or anybody else who is different. They want to destroy Israel

eventually. They are not kidding.

I wish we could go back in time--not just to Lebanon, but I wish we

could go back into the 1930s and take Hitler for what he was. I wish we

would understand who our enemy is and take them for what they are. They

are barbarians who kill without conscience. They have an agenda in

writing. They are hell-bent on achieving that agenda. That agenda goes

like this: Destroy anything or anybody that embraces a concept called

democracy or is sympathetic to the West, to moderate governments where

they exist in the Mideast; turn your attention toward America, drive us

out of the Mideast; establish a religious-dominated Mideast with a view

of religion that is harsh to everything and everybody; and destroy

Israel. I am not making this up. This is not my theory of what they

want to do; this is what they said they will do.

Iraq is the chance to turn it around. Iraq is a great opportunity for

us, the Iraqi people, and the world at large to stand up to the

extremists and beat them politically, militarily, and economically.

This resolution we are about to consider or may consider sends the

worst possible signal at the most important time in the war on

terrorism. Whatever mistakes President Bush has made in his

administration--I think they are well documented--the biggest mistake

is yet to come, and that would be passing this resolution.

I yield the floor.