Madam President, this has been an interesting debate. I

have had the opportunity to watch some of it and listen to more of it.

I think we are finally debating a very important subject.

From time to time, there is a tendency to treat the serious too

lightly and the light too seriously here on the floor of the Senate.

This is a serious matter being treated seriously. Our country is at

war. Today, we have young men and women in America's military uniforms

walking down alleyways and streets in Baghdad and other dangerous

places in Iraq, risking their lives. Some, perhaps today, will give

their lives. War is a serious subject, the most serious subject for our

country.

I wish to talk a little about the history of how we have gotten to

this place and what I think we should do.

I recall Memorial Day, shortly after 9/11. I believe it was the first

Memorial Day after 9/11--perhaps the second--when a young man whom I

had previously appointed to West Point came back. He was missing an

arm, from combat.

We had, of course, gone to Afghanistan, waging a war against the

Taliban that had housed and harbored al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden, and

then shortly thereafter we went to the country of Iraq.

This young man, who came from a small town in North Dakota and whom I

was privileged to send to the West Point Academy, came back missing an

arm but enormously proud of having served his country. I recall

speaking at the outdoor event at the veterans cemetery. He was there.

He spoke. I was enormously proud of him. He was proud of serving his

country.

I guess I described a verse I heard some long while ago--I don't even

know the author--that:

We can name many patriots in this country who serve today and who

have served this country--in world wars, conflicts--who serve today

because our country asks them to serve. It is always the case that old

men send young men and women to war. Wars might be different if the

ages were reversed, but they are not.

The question for me today is, What are our goals? My guess is every

person serving in this Chamber, every man and woman, every Republican

and Democrat, every conservative and liberal, wants the same thing for

this country. We want our country to succeed. We are on our side, we

are on the side of right, we are on the side supporting the greatest

country that exists on this Earth.

We made some serious mistakes. We went to Afghanistan. That was the

right thing to do. It was, after all, Afghanistan that housed Osama bin

Laden, who boasted about committing the terrorist acts of 9/11,

murdering thousands of innocent Americans. They boasted about that.

They said, ``We did it.'' Al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden, al-Zarqawi--``We

did it,'' they said. They were in Afghanistan, so we went to

Afghanistan and toppled the Taliban government of Afghanistan, and the

leadership of al-Qaida escaped. The leadership of al-Qaida went,

apparently, to the hills in northern Pakistan.

Then, with President Bush's direction, went to Iraq.

A great deal of top-secret information was disclosed to those of us

in Congress and some to the American people. The Secretary of State

made a lengthy presentation with charts and slides to the United

Nations, a presentation to the world. It turns out much of the

intelligence upon which that was based was fundamentally wrong, some of

it embarrassingly inaccurate.

One single source, someone who we now know the Germans thought to

have been a drunk and a fabricator, was used by the administration to

suggest that Iraq threatened our country because it had mobile chemical

weapons labs. This source, called ``Curveball,'' whom we now know to

have been a single source and a source who lied, was the basis for

substantial allegations to the Congress and the American people about

evidence of a weapon of mass destruction program in Iraq. The source

for yellow cake from Niger turns out to have been forged papers.

Equipment to recreate a nuclear weapons program in the form of aluminum

tubes--the Secretary of State and others gave us information about

that, information that is now public but was imparted to us in top-

secret sessions without disclosing something she was responsible to

disclose: There were other parts of the Government that said no, these

are not aluminum tubes to reconstitute a nuclear program, they are not

that at all. They are thought to be for use in rocketry, and that is

exactly what we found out later to be the case. Very substantial

mistakes were made but, nonetheless, we cannot turn back the clock.

American soldiers were committed.

As a result of that, a number of things have happened in the country

of Iraq. While the terrorists fled to Pakistan and Osama bin Laden and

al-Zarqawi and the other leadership of the al-Qaida organization hid in

northern Pakistan, now some over 2,000 days since they boasted about

murdering thousands of Americans--while that was the case, we went to

Iraq.

Saddam Hussein was deposed. This man was a butcher. We have unearthed

mass graves in Iraq that housed hundreds of thousands of skeletons of

people murdered by the Saddam Hussein regime. Is it a worthy thing to

have deposed a leader of Iraq with that kind of record? Yes. Saddam

Hussein is gone. He was executed. The Iraqi people have now voted for

their own Constitution. They wrote it and supported it. The Iraqi

people have now elected their own government by their own hand. So

there is no dictator, they have a Constitution, and they have a new

government.

The problem at the moment is they are not able to provide for their

own security. In fact, there is a civil war occurring in the country of

Iraq. We have just received the latest National Intelligence Estimate--

the latest National Intelligence Estimate, which is a compilation of

whatever is said by the best minds that exist in the intelligence

community.

This is unclassified:

If you take those words as part of what the National Intelligence

Estimate says, this is a civil war. Now we end up with American

soldiers right smack dab in the middle of a civil war in Iraq while

Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaida leadership exists in northern Pakistan

directing al-Qaida's terrorist activities.

Now why does this matter? Let me describe why that is important. On

January 11, 2007, Mr. Negroponte who was then the Director of National

Intelligence testified before Congress. He said:

Let me say that again. What is the greatest threat to our country's

interests? Al-Qaida. That is not me; that is the head of American

intelligence, Mr. Negroponte. This was reaffirmed 3 weeks ago by the

current head of U.S. intelligence. The greatest threat to our country,

the greatest terrorist threat to our country, is al-Qaida. They pose

the greatest threat to our interests and to our homeland.

Now an additional statement by Mr. Negroponte says this:

All of this is a direct quote from the unclassified testimony of the

head of intelligence in our country. Al-Qaida is the greatest terrorist

threat to our country, No. 1; No. 2, they continue to plot attacks

against our homeland from their leaders' secure hideout in Pakistan.

Now let me ask the question: What is the goal here? What is the goal

for this country? We were attacked on 9/11. Thousands of Americans were

murdered by airplanes full of fuel, used as

guided missiles to fly into office buildings, to the Pentagon. We were

attacked on 9/11 by al-Qaida. They boasted about it. They said: We did

it. Give us credit. We murdered innocent Americans.

Where are they now, over 2,000 days later? They are, according to our

top intelligence experts, in a secure hideout in Pakistan with the

objective of inflicting mass casualties by continuing to plot attacks

against our homeland.

So what are we doing today? We are in Iraq going house to house, in

Baghdad, in the middle of a civil war.

What is the goal? Is our goal to fight terrorism? To take on the

terrorists? To eliminate the terrorists? To eliminate the leadership of

al-Qaida? Is it our goal to go after those who attacked our country and

murdered thousands of innocent Americans?

If that is our goal, let me ask this question: Why are they in a

secure hideaway in northern Pakistan and our soldiers are going house

to house in a civil war in Iraq, in Baghdad? Why? Maybe it is not our

goal to fight the terrorists. Is it not our goal to take them on where

they are? Yes, there are some al-Qaida in Anbar Province in Iraq. This

resolution, by the way, will allow us to redeploy in Iraq to make an

even greater effort against that al-Qaida organization that exists in

Anbar Province. But our National Intelligence Estimate is quite clear:

What is happening in Iraq, in the main, outside of Anbar Province has

very little to do with al-Qaida and with terrorism. It has everything

to do with a civil war and sectarian violence.

So the question is: What should be our goal? I very strongly believe

we should redeploy our troops and understand that our obligation is to

take on those interests that want to attack us in our homeland, those

interests that attacked us previously, those interests that represent

the greatest threat to our country as described by the head of U.S.

intelligence.

Why on Earth on this day, Wednesday--2,010 days, nearly, following 9/

11, after Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida boasted about launching attacks

in our homeland and murdering the American people, murdering thousands

of Americans--why on Earth would we not be in a full-court press to

prosecute the war against terrorists? No, this situation in Iraq is not

a proxy against the war on terrorism. It is not. It cannot be described

that way.

The National Intelligence Estimate tells us it is sectarian violence,

by and large. The head of national intelligence tells us where the head

of the greatest threat to our country is in northern Pakistan, the

leadership of al-Qaida. We are going door to door in Baghdad in the

middle of a civil war, and they are in northern Pakistan promoting

continued attacks against our homeland.

Is that a disconnect? It seems to me it is. Anybody in this Chamber

who stands up and has a strong passion and opinion about these issues,

I respect. The last thing I would ever do is suggest they are not

patriotic, they don't love their country, they do not support soldiers.

All nonsense. Every man and woman who aspires to come and serve, who is

here in this Chamber, I know loves this country, supports our soldiers,

and wants our country to succeed. That is a fact. This is not about

anybody having bad motives. It is about our country trying to make a

decision: Are we on the right path or the wrong path? Do we think the

experience we have had in Iraq--now that this has become a civil war,

in which we have made very little progress but seen many Americans

killed and far more wounded--do we think that kind of situation can and

should continue, or should we say to the Iraqi people the following: We

want what is best for you as well. We have, with the blood and treasury

of American soldiers and the American people, given you the following

opportunities: You were able to get rid of Saddam Hussein. He does not

exist anymore. He has been executed. You were able to write yourself a

new constitution and you were able to cast your votes for a new

government.

The question now is this: This is your country, not ours. Do you have

the will and the capability to provide for your own security? Iraq

belongs to you, not us. If you cannot provide for your own security,

the American taxpayer and the American soldiers cannot do that for a

long period of time and should not be asked to do that year after year

after year.

We ought to redeploy, and that redeployment ought to be so our

country can wage war against terrorists. We know where they are. Our

National Intelligence Estimate and the head of the national

intelligence organizations have told us. They are the greatest threat.

We know where they are. Yet my guess is they do not feel terribly

threatened today.

What is the goal? What is our goal here? I would hope our goal as a

country is to decide to go after and eliminate those terrorists who

plot attacks against our country.

Now there are many ways for us to manifest our love of country and

our passion about these issues. But I think there is one other issue

most of us would agree upon. One of the concerns I have had about what

is happening these days with respect to the Iraq war is we have sent

soldiers to war, but we have not asked our country to make a similar

commitment. Just this morning I asked the Chief of Staff of the Army at

a hearing, an Appropriations hearing, about a new personnel carrier we

have developed. They say it will reduce deaths from improvised

explosive devices by two-thirds in a country such as Iraq--new design,

stronger, more capable. I asked: Were we ordering a lot of them? No,

not really. At today's pace it will take about 6 years to replace the

existing vehicles.

I chaired a democratic policy committee hearing last year, and

retired Marine Colonel Hammes came to the hearing. He said: You know,

in the Second World War, at the end we were producing 50,000 warplanes

a year.

Do you know why? Because our country, by God, decided the whole

country was going to make an effort to go to war, to commit and to

produce and do everything there was to give our soldiers the

opportunity to fight and win. We have not done that.

The Army has ordered 2,500 of those new armored personnel carriers

some estimate will save two-thirds of the lives that are now being lost

to IEDs. Our country is told we are at war, you go ahead and go to the

mall, go shopping. The soldiers will go to war. In fact, we won't ask

you to pay for anything either. We have now spent $450 billion, plus or

minus. We are on the way to spending over $650 billion in Afghanistan

and Iraq and the war on terrorism without asking the taxpayer to pay

one cent; add it to the debt. The country has not been asked to go with

the soldiers. There is no sacrifice. It is just the soldiers.

We have a resolution on the floor of the Senate. The resolution is

S.J. Res. 9. I heard some of the debate a bit earlier. Some have

suggested this resolution is about cutting and running. People will

think we have left. I think most of the people in this world would take

a look at us and say this is the strongest country in the world. It has

got the biggest military in the world. We spend more money than any

other country, any other series of countries, on defense. We spend more

money than the top 30 countries combined on defense. Unbelievable.

We were attacked by the leadership of al-Qaida and their operatives

on

9/11/2001. It is now 2007. They are still alive. Our national

intelligence chief tells us where they are. They are still the greatest

threat to this country. They are still plotting attacks against our

country. And we are this behemoth military Nation that has such

capability. Why are we not using that capability for the goal I think

is preeminent, and that is the goal of protecting our country and

eliminating those who are plotting attacks against our country, the

leadership of al-Qaida? The way to do that will not be to wait for

President Bush to decide he wants to change course. He does not want to

change course. He wants to keep doing what we have been doing. But the

way to change course is to pass the piece of legislation that says: Let

us redeploy our troops.

Speaking only for me, I believe the redeployment ought to be to go

after the greatest threat that exists to this country's future, the

greatest threat described by our National Intelligence Estimate and the

national intelligence chief. It is not a surprise, not a secret. We all

understand where that threat is. And yet we reduced our forces in

Afghanistan early so we could invade

Iraq. Now we have got problems in Afghanistan. We have got bogged down

in Iraq. We are now in the middle of a civil war in Iraq.

The greatest threat to our country's interests is in a secure

hideaway in Pakistan; a secure hideaway. That ought never happen. The

head of intelligence in this country ought never be telling us there is

a secure hideaway for the organization that wants to destroy our

country, to launch attacks against innocent Americans. There ought not

be a place that is secure on this planet for people who are doing that.

What is the goal? Is not the goal to fight terrorism, to take on the

terrorists? If that is the case, then let's heed the words of the head

of intelligence, to know where they are, what they are doing, who they

are, and find a way to bring them to justice. The sooner the better.

After nearly 5 1/2 years, it is past time, long past time for us to

set our sights on those who represent the greatest threat to our

country. That is the reason I will support this resolution. This is

about redeployment. This is about establishing the goals we ought to

have as a country.

Finally, let me say this: I have enormous respect for the men and

women serving in the military. They are an unbelievable bunch of young

men and women. I recall speaking to a helicopter crew in Afghanistan.

They were young men and women, average age 19, 20, 21, 22 years of age

who were keeping those helicopters in the air.

The officer said these are kids, but they are highly trained kids,

highly motivated kids, these young people. You go in the field and

watch what they do, and it is unbelievable. They love their country.

When their country asks them to serve, they serve. But their country,

it seems to me, owes them something too. Their country owes them the

responsibility of clear, thoughtful policies, the ability to address

what is important to our country.

When we use military force, we ought to use military force not in the

middle of a civil war some place, but instead use military force to

confront the terrorists who threaten America. That is what military

force ought to be used for at this point. We understand terrorism is

awful. Most of us have never before understood there are plenty of

people out there who are willing to die themselves if they can kill a

few innocent people in order to make their point. That is something we

have never before understood very well. That is modern terrorism. We

have to confront that. We owe it to our soldiers to have a set of goals

that represent the best interests of this country.

So my hope, in short, is for us to be able to tell the Iraqis: This

is your country, not ours. You need to provide for your own security.

We are going to give you a sufficient time to do that, but we cannot

keep American soldiers in the middle of a civil war for a great length

of time. We intend to turn our attention to where it should have been

all along; and that is, to confront the greatest threat that exists to

our country, which is al-Qaida, its network around the world, and its

plans to try to create terrorist acts in our homeland.

That ought to be our goal. The way to achieve that goal is through

the redeployment that would come with this legislation.

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a

quorum.