I think the Senator from South Carolina makes an exceedingly

important point here, and that is that our theory, which was that the

Muslim world itself had to reject this virulent, militant Islamist

approach, which is manifested in the terrorism of al-Qaida; that until

the Muslim world itself turned on those militants, those terrorists, it

would be difficult for the West itself to actually defeat terrorism. It

could pose a defensive posture, but it would not be defeated. What the

Senator from South Carolina has said is what we are now seeing, as a

result of the American support for the Iraqi people: A, a unification

of the Iraqi people and, B, importantly, a rejection of this militant

Islamist terrorism to the point that they are now joining in the fight

and have something invested in that in terms of their country.

The question I want to ask has to do with how all of this relates to

American security. Yesterday, Senator Warner asked both General

Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker whether, as a result of the success of

the surge--and a key point that the Senator from South Carolina made,

that now the Iraqi Muslim population was itself fighting to excise this

cancer from the region--whether this fact does translate into America

being safer. I wonder if the Senator could comment on both General

Petraeus's response to that and Ambassador Crocker's response, and the

Senator's own extensive experience and what his comments on that would

be.

Mr. President, that is an extremely important question

because there is a lot of rhetoric about this war. The question is,

What is the action line here, what can Congress do? Actually, it is a

question of what Congress must do.

As I understand it, looking at General Petraeus's testimony, he was

very adamant that Congress needed to pass the supplemental

appropriations bill that will actually fund the troops in the field.

This money was requested over a year ago. It represents a little over

$100 billion.

According to his testimony, it is critical not only to the military

needs but also he importantly talked about the Commander's Emergency

Response Program, the State Department's Quick Response Fund, and the

USAID programs.

The Senator from South Carolina was talking a moment ago about this

two-part process, not only the political reconciliation but the

economic reconstruction of the country.

General Petraeus himself, who clearly wants to get the troops funded,

noted the interrelationship of the funding to help reconstruct the

country, as well as to support the troops.

We are very soon going to be in a situation, according to Secretary

Gates, where the Armed Forces are going to have to allow money to be

borrowed from their regular operational accounts to fund the operations

in Iraq and Afghanistan. He said the results of that would be a

slowdown in training and equipping Iraqi forces, the halting of

military operations and pay of defense personnel, and losing the

ability to replace lost and damaged equipment by ongoing operations

and, finally, that some operations simply would not be started because

they will not know in advance that the funding will be there to

complete the operation, something with which I am sure no operational

commander in the field would want to live.

My understanding of his testimony is he very strongly urged the

Congress to quickly pass the supplemental appropriations bill so the

troops in the field can be funded and do the mission, after all, we

have sent them to do.

Mr. President, I say to my colleague there are going to be

efforts apparently to hold this war funding hostage to other funding

requests. For example, one of our colleagues said we are going to look

at the supplemental not only for the $190 billion for the war--by the

way, that figure is incorrect; it is $102 billion--but also what we can

do on this bill for summer jobs programs.

I submit it is important to fund the troops because we have sent them

on a mission. They volunteered, and they deserve our support. We should

not threaten to withhold that support unless there is also funding for

other programs that have a far lower priority than the security of our

troops and the security of the United States.

I will also add one other point. In reading from what General

Petraeus said yesterday and focusing right down on the American people,

it is clearly in our national interest, he said, to help Iraq prevent

the resurgence of al-Qaida in the heart of the Arab world. Both he and

Ambassador Crocker said it is worth it to the United States that the

success there is making us safer here at home. That is what it all gets

back to, when folks say we need to have supplemental funding on other

programs. This is making us safer at home.

I will conclude. I want my colleague from Connecticut to comment for

a moment, and the Senator from Tennessee also wanted a couple minutes

at the end of our time. I assured him we would have a of couple

minutes. We may have to ask for an extra minute or so.