Madam President, I have been on the floor of the Senate

for the last half hour, listening to my colleague in what is, in fact,

a very important debate for this country. I say that, even though the

wringing of hands would suggest that somehow the debate is being

blocked and the will of the Senate has been thwarted. I suggest quite

the opposite. It has become a finger-pointing in a procedural way.

I believe the Republican leader came to the floor yesterday and said

let's have a couple of votes, several votes; you can vote up or down on

the Levin-Warner resolution; you can vote up or down on the Gregg

resolution. It was then the leadership on the majority side, the

Democratic side, blocked it. I think the American people are wise to

the tactics at hand. They are not unaware, and they are frustrated by

what is going on in Iraq today. Clearly, we are focused. Whether it is

the Congress of the United States or a vast majority of the American

people, we are becoming increasingly critical of a war that has

frustrated many of us.

The Senator from Maryland voted against it. He said so a few moments

ago. I voted for it. At the same time, I grow increasingly critical, as

do many of the citizens of my State, as to what will be the future,

what will be our success and/or failure and at a cost of how many more

American lives.

I am critically concerned that this Government in Iraq now stand up.

We have allowed them to form and to shape and to vote. They now have a

Constitution. They now must lead. In leading, I hope it could be to

stability to the region and that it will not offset and throw out of

balance what the free world looks at and says is very important and

that is, of course, the war on terror and the general stability of the

Middle East.

Indeed, I think much has been lost in the debate around this country

as to the significance of the Middle East itself. I was extremely

pleased last week when that kind of an elder statesman of our country,

Henry Kissinger, came before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and

in a very real and important way, and in a bipartisan way, said: Let's

not forget our perspective. While for the short term and for the moment

we are focused on Iraq, as we should be, let's not fail to recognize

that since World War II, we have been in the Middle East to bring

stability to the region for a safer, more stable Western World.

I don't think there is any question about that. He was frank about it

when he stressed diplomacy as an important tool. I have long advocated

frank, open talks amongst our friends and neighbors around the world,

not only about the region but about the role of Iraq within the region

and what we must do. However, Dr. Kissinger also stressed that, under

the present conditions in Iraq, withdrawal or the signs of withdrawal

is simply not an option for America's forces. So anyone who comes to

the floor today and says: Oh, but it is an option and we ought to start

now, or we ought to send all the signals to our friends and neighbors

around the world that we are beginning to pull back, is going against a

trend that I think is critically important. They could set in motion

the kind of activity in Iraq that could bring about a phenomenal

genocide and the possibility of neighbors tumbling in on top of

neighbors to create conflict in the Middle East that could bring down

the whole of the region. If that were to happen, then I am quite

confident that those who want to withdraw would find themselves in a

very precarious situation. What do we do? Do we go back in with greater

force to stabilize the region, when friendly, moderate Arab nations are

now tumbling into war because we would no longer stand or we would no

longer force, through a diplomatic process, those countries of the

world to come together to work with us, to cooperate?

While most agree that the current situation in Iraq must be dealt

with politically--and we have heard that time and again--and

economically, our military involvement is critical to provide the

Iraqis the stability they need in this new democratic process. I don't

mind pegging timelines a little bit and I don't mind thresholds and

measurements and I think it is important we not only send that message

but that we get it done, we get it done for the sake of our position in

Iraq and certainly forcing the Iraqi Government to move--those are all

phenomenally important issues.

Let me stress two last facts. It is quite simple. The 116th from

Idaho, the largest deployment of Idaho's troops in this war, was there

and served and served honorably and proudly and the work they did was

phenomenally important and we are proud of them. Let me also suggest

that while many will say the general we now send to Iraq is the best

military mind we have available at the moment, the author of the

Army's war handbook on terror, we are saying to General Petraeus: You

are the best there is, go forth and be successful, but, oh, by the way,

we don't agree with the mission--what kind of a mixed message is that

we now send to our military?

The Senator from Georgia was right. The world is listening to this

debate. Our men and women in uniform are listening to this debate. The

enemies of the cause are listening and saying: Oh, the Senate of the

United States is getting cold feet. Our opportunities are at hand. All

we have to do is wait them out. All we have to do is accelerate the

violence, and they will turn out the lights in the green zone and go

home.

Then the world, at least the Iraqi world, will erupt in a civil

conflict, a civil war of phenomenal proportion.

Those are the realities we deal with today. I hope this Senate stays

on point. This is an issue that is critical to the future of our

country, to the future of the free world, to the region of the Middle

East, to any kind of stability we hope could be brought there. I hope

we have the votes--and they ought to be up or down--and I don't mind

being on the record at all. They need to be substantive, they need to

have the force and effect of law, just not the ring of the politics of

the Chamber, because that is what we are getting today--a heavy dose of

politics and very little substance.

We hide behind procedure? I don't think so. Let us bring these issues

forward. The Craig resolution? Up or down. Levin-Warner? Up or down.

What is wrong with those votes? That is what we were sent here to do. I

would hope our leadership could bring us to that.

So, to reiterate:

Many people around the country, including myself, have taken a much

more critical look at the way the war in Iraq has been handled.

However, through all the hardships our soldiers face day-to-day on the

streets of Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq, it still remains evident to

me that our success in Iraq and the success of the current Iraq

government, is critical to the security of our Nation, the stability of

the Middle East, and the fight against terrorism worldwide.

Indeed, much has been lost in the debates around this country as to

the significance of the greater Middle East stability when looking at

the situation in Iraq. Our country has maintained a presence in that

region of the world since World War II, and it should not be a surprise

to anyone that many countries there depend and rely on our presence

there, both economically and for their own national security. After

reviewing the recent transcript of Dr. Henry Kissinger before the

Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I agreed with many of Dr.

Kissinger's views on the current situation in Iraq as it relates to the

Middle East as a whole, and the severe consequences the international

community will face should we fail in Iraq.

Dr. Kissinger stressed diplomacy, something I have long advocated in

this conflict and frankly for any conflict. I don't believe there is

one Member of Congress who takes the decision lightly to send out

troops into combat unless we all firmly believe it is a last option. I

know I certainly didn't, and I know that an overwhelming majority of

both Senators and Congressmen believed that as well when we authorized

the use of force in Iraq back in 2002.

However, Dr. Kissinger also stressed that under the present

conditions in Iraq, withdrawal is not an option for American forces.

Such a withdrawal would have long reaching consequences on the war on

terror worldwide, could lead to widespread genocide in Iraq and

possible neighboring countries, as well as severe economic consequences

for all Middle Eastern countries. It is clear that such a circumstance

would mandate international forces be sent back into Iraq, but the

costs at that point would be grave.

While most agree that the current situation in Iraq must be dealt

with politically and economically, our military involvement is critical

to providing the Iraqis the stability they need to let their new

democracy take root. If we pull our troops out of Iraq now, or deny

them much needed reinforcements as some would like to do, we risk

losing Baghdad and possibly the entire country to full blown civil war.

Under those circumstances, the government of Iraq would fall, and Iran

and Syria would strengthen their grip on the Middle East, endangering

the national security of America and our allies worldwide.

It is my hope that diplomatic efforts will continue in a more

aggressive fashion to bring the international community to the

realization of a failed State in Iraq, and the real consequences that

we all face should our efforts fall short of stabilizing Baghdad and

the country as a whole. Because the consequences are so high, I do not

believe that our soldiers' withdrawal from Iraq should be placed on any

timetable, and we need to reassure our soldiers and commanders in Iraq

that we will continue to support their efforts. After all, they are

operating in Iraq, but the work they are doing will have a far reaching

effect to stabilize the Middle East.

Over the past few weeks, there have been many who have been outspoken

about their disapproval of the President's new plan for Iraq. Not being

an expert in military tactics, I do not believe it is my role as a U.S.

Senator to play general for our soldiers as some are. Instead, I

believe it is my duty in Congress to provide our soldiers with the

resources and funding they require to do their job with the best

equipment possible, while also pledging my unending moral support for

the work they do each and every day to keep Americans safe both at home

and abroad.

Every 4 years the citizens of America go to the polls to elect a

commander in chief, who is responsible to the American people to lead

our military in times of peace and times of war. It is no mistake that

the founding fathers gave the power to declare war to the Congress, but

the power to lead the military to the President. Our soldiers should

not have to follow 535 Congressional ``generals'' who hold up critical

funding while they second-guess tactical decisions of the commander in

chief and military leaders.

Over the last few weeks a lot has been made of the troop

reinforcement President Bush outlined to the American people. Prior to

his speech, I and several other Members of Congress met with the

President to discuss the current situation in Iraq. I made it very

clear that Idahoans and I cannot continue to support the status quo;

and he agreed. President Bush has spent the last many months working

with his national security advisers, commanding officers in Iraq,

Members of Congress and experts in the field of military issues in

order to revise our national strategy with regards to Iraq and come up

with a new strategy for victory.

Make no mistake, the onus is now on the Iraqi people and the Iraqi

government to act, and I was extremely pleased to hear President Bush

reiterate that fact. The efforts of our soldiers have given the Iraqi

people a great opportunity to live in a free and stable country, but

they must stand up and accept that responsibility.

My home State of Idaho has shared some of the burden of this war in

Iraq. The 116th Brigade Combat Team served courageously for twelve

months in Kirkuk and surrounding areas, and they have since returned

home to their families. I had the opportunity to visit them in Iraq and

was extremely proud of the feedback on these soldiers I received from

Iraqi government officials, civilians, and U.S. military leaders. I

would also like to spotlight all Idahoans who are serving in the Armed

Forces in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. I am eternally grateful for

their service and I will continue to provide them with all the support

I can give.

It is my hope that Members of Congress will not pursue antiwar

politics to the detriment of our soldiers in the field. Our soldiers

have been fighting courageously in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere

around the world to protect each and every American life, and I believe

it is incumbent for the Congress to stand behind them. Numerous bills

and resolutions have been proposed in the Senate to disapprove of their

mission, cap troop levels, withhold funding for the reinforcements, or

even completely de-fund the troops serving in Iraq. I cannot and will

not support any legislation that I see as unproductive to our current

efforts in Iraq, because I believe it places our forces in greater

danger and could embolden our enemies to continue their attacks against

innocent Iraqis, Americans and our allies.

In testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee in January of

this

year, General Hayden, the Director of the CIA, responded to a question

regarding what would happen if we pulled out now from Iraq. Director

Hayden responded, Three very quick areas:

He went on to state that this directly and immediately threatens the

United States homeland because it:

During his confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services

Committee, GEN David Petraeus supported President Bush's plan to

increase troop levels in Baghdad and Anbar province. In response to

questioning before that committee, General Petraeus made it clear he

believes that the reinforcement of soldiers into Baghdad and Anbar in

Iraq will bolster the Iraqis' ability to stabilize their government and

defeat the insurgency, instead of allowing them to continue to buck

that responsibility, as some have asserted.

Many in Congress have stated publicly that this is the last chance

the United States has to get it right in Iraq. If that is the case, I

feel there is no general better qualified to be in charge of our ground

forces and get things turned around on the ground than General

Petraeus. I recognize that the American people have grown weary over

the last months since the violence has escalated in Iraq, but I remain

optimistic that the Iraqi government, with the aid of our soldiers, can

turn things around.

I had the pleasure of meeting General Petraeus during one of my two

trips to Iraq and was very impressed by his knowledge of the situation

and his expertise in counterinsurgency. I have no doubt that General

Petraeus is the right man to lead our forces in Iraq and I believe that

he will overcome the new challenges he now faces. Let us not send the

right man and then tell him it is the wrong job.

In closing, while I share the concerns of many of my colleagues

regarding the situation in Iraq, I will support the President's plan to

provide the reinforcements necessary to provide stability in Baghdad

and Anbar province. I am hopeful that this plan will give the Iraqi

government the best chance to stand on their own two feet and make the

positive strides necessary to take control of the security situation

and function as a stable government. It is this Senator's personal

opinion that resolutions condemning the President's new way forward

send the wrong message to our soldiers, the Iraqi people, and

especially our enemies.

I certainly appreciate and support the role of Congress to provide

oversight with respect to U.S. military engagements. However, I do not

believe we should cripple the Commander in Chief's ability to work with

our military leadership to defeat our enemies, and passing a resolution

condemning the President's new plan for Iraq would do precisely that.

Instead, I support resolutions that call for the support of the

American people and Congress to give the President's plan a chance to

work. Mistakes have been made, unquestionably, and the violence in

Baghdad and Anbar province has grown to a level that few predicted, but

I am not yet ready to throw in the towel on this President's new plan

and our soldiers' ability to assist in stabilizing Iraq before they

even get a chance to try.

Madam President, I yield the floor.