Mr. President, I spoke briefly this morning about the need

to have votes on the Republican resolutions--the Republican Gregg

resolution and the bipartisan Lieberman-McCain resolution. It is very

important we give the opportunity for this body to go on record saying,

No. 1, they do support and will not cut off funding for our troops in

Iraq. That needs to be said in the Gregg resolution.

It is unusual and very unfortunate that at this time, when we are

actually at war, we are considering resolutions which would say: Well,

we don't support sending more troops over. We are actually sending

troops over, and there are some who want to say: Well, we don't support

the mission; good luck, guys and gals; you are going over, but we don't

support what you are doing.

We owe them more than that. We owe them what used to be the baseline

in our discussions. Unfortunately, in time of war, we can debate and we

should debate. However, the Levin-Warner resolution, the only

resolution at this point the majority would let us vote on, sends a

wrong message to the insurgents, militia, and, obviously, to our

troops.

This is a very serious and difficult situation in Iraq, no question

about it. We got the national intelligence estimate, and it says these

are tough times. But--and I agree with my colleague from Florida--we

cannot afford to fail.

During General Petraeus's testimony before the Armed Services

Committee last week, he chillingly described the typical Iraqi

terrorist as ``determined, adaptable, barbaric'' and that ``he will try

to wait us out.''

And now we are considering a resolution signaling to this enemy that

this body doesn't think the terrorists will have to wait too long. By

capping the troop strength, this resolution limits the very leaders

this body confirmed as fit to lead and determine strategies and levels

of troops.

The proponents of the resolution to limit troop strength must now

believe that sitting here 8,000 miles away, this body is more equipped

than our military leaders to say what our force structure should be in

Iraq. That is unacceptable; it is totally unacceptable.

The question has been raised: Will this plan work? There are lots of

challenges. It is a challenging situation. The intelligence community,

in its National Intelligence Estimate, says there are many difficult

factors; it is a complex situation. But they said this is the best we

can hope to do. This is our best effort to make sure something comes

out that provides a stable Iraq, one that will not be a haven for

terrorist groups such as al-Qaida to operate.

The intelligence community was also very forthright, both in the NIE

that we received last week and in testimony several weeks earlier in an

open hearing of the Intelligence Committee. They said if we cut and

run, Iraq would descend into chaos, giving the terrorist groups, such

as al-Qaida and probably the Shia terrorist groups, the chance to

operate freely in that country. It would lead to slaughter of more and

more Iraqis--innocent Iraqis--and it would likely involve the entire

region.

It is clear that cutting and running should not be an option. There

may be some people who would vote to cut off funding. We ought to let

them have a chance at least to say we want to end it now, not we want

to tinker with the military strategy so perhaps we can gain some

political points at home.

I have heard it said that some of the people who are supporting the

Levin-Warner resolution think we should be following the guidelines of

the Iraq Study Group. I had the opportunity on Sunday to ask Jim Baker

is this military plan the military plan you have supported? He said:

Yes, it is.

Others have said we need a new strategy, and I agree. I agree we

shouldn't have gone forward with debaathification and disbanding the

Iraqi Army. That mistake is behind us. But we need a new strategy that

can lead us to victory in Iraq.

It seems to me the place where we want to be is getting the Iraqi

Government, al-Maliki and his Sunni and Kurdish counterparts in the

Government, to take responsibility and say we are going to establish

stability, we are going to end the insurgency. To do that, they have

said: We need the support of American troops, not to be on the

frontlines--and I agree with those who said we want to move the Iraqis

out front when they are stopping the Shia and Sunni violence; that is

where they should be. We still have a role, and we can play a very

important role in helping to take out the al-Qaida leadership and the

other organized international radical Islamist terrorists, whether they

be Shia or Sunni, and we can do that. That is part of what the troop

surge will do. But we need to have them take over, and we need to train

them.

The intelligence community said the police are not ready to take over

now. We have found that when we embed American troops, provide American

troops in smaller numbers but with Iraqis, they function better. We can

help show them how to win, and that is a plan I think we ought to

pursue because what is the cost if we lose? Iraq is the center point in

the war on terror. And unfortunately, we have no better source than

Osama bin Laden, who says:

That is what he calls Baghdad, ``the capital of the caliphate.''

There are similar transmissions by Ayman al-Zawahiri, who said: ``We

must have Iraq as our caliphate.'' So we have to wait. We have to make

sure we stabilize the area.

It seems to me this is absolutely the best plan than fiddling around

and adopting a resolution that says, no, we don't need 21,000 more

troops. Some of the same people who said earlier this year and last

year that we need more troops now are saying no, no, 21,000 more troops

is not necessary. Whom are we going to believe, someone standing on the

floor of the Senate or the commanding general who has responsibility

for making sure that our troops accomplish their mission and they are

safe? If he says we need those troops, I wish to vote for a resolution

that says we need those troops. I wish to vote for a resolution that

says we shouldn't cut off funding; we need to support our troops when

they are in the field.

What is at stake in this resolution deserves a commitment that goes

far

beyond what the political pundits and political operatives pontificate

in Washington. I don't say all the people supporting this resolution

have a desire to undercut our troops, to send the wrong message to our

allies in the region or to encourage al-Qaida and Jaysh al-Mahdi. But,

unfortunately, that is what this resolution can do.

I had the honor today of talking with the head of the intelligence

agency of one of our allies in the region. I said: What message would

it send to your country if we adopt a resolution saying the President

can't send over more troops? He said: That would be very bad because we

want to see peace and stability survive in Iraq. It is vitally

important to the entire region, and we are prepared to help the

coalition make sure stability is achieved. We want to make sure Iran

doesn't take over that country, that chaos doesn't ensue, and we--and

he was speaking for several of the countries in the region--we want to

provide aid to help rebuild the economy so there will be a stable

economy because a stable economy is one of the best ways to convince

people they don't need to get 25 bucks from setting out an improvised

explosive device along the roadside.

So we would be sending a bad message to our allies, and we would be

sending a message of great hope to the people of al-Qaida.

That is not what we ought to be doing, Mr. President. What is at

stake deserves a commitment that goes far beyond the political pundits.

Those who call for an end to the war don't want to talk about the fact

that the war in Iraq will not end but, in fact, will only grow more

dangerous if we leave with that country in chaos.

So as we debate these resolutions, Congress's role in the Iraq policy

is clear: Either Congress needs to exercise its constitutional powers

of the purse and cut funding for the operations of the troops, which is

madness, or get behind them. We shouldn't confirm General Petraeus and

then say: Oh, but we don't support your plan. So if we are not using

our power of the purse to cut off funds and force a hasty withdrawal,

what are we doing? Are we telling 21,000 brave men and women who will

be going to Iraq that we are uncomfortable with the dangerous mission

you are about to undertake but not offering any alternative? I am sure

our troops would find that encouraging.

Simply put, this may be a situation where there are good politics,

but these good politics equal bad policy. Politics are trumping good

policy.

A headline in today's Roll Call reads: ``Democrats to Launch PR Blitz

on Iraq Vote.''

Is that what this is all about? Is that the politics? I think that is

a very sad message.

What is at stake is so much bigger than politics, bigger than the

2008 election, and it is a real disservice to our troops to see our

national security become a political election gamble.

I previously entered into the Record an article about 12 days ago by

Robert Kagan, senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for

International Peace and transatlantic fellow at the German Marshall

Fund. He wrote a piece saying it is a grand delusion if we think we can

walk away from Iraq and not solve it. He went on to say:

This is coming, as he indicates in his article, just as American

soldiers are finally beginning the hard job of establishing a measure

of peace, security, and order in critical sections of Baghdad.

He goes on to say:

And, finally, he concludes, and it is fitting advice for this body:

Mr. President, I hope we will vote on resolutions that do that.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.