Mr. President, our country desperately needs a new

vision for strengthening our national security, and I believe it starts

by redeploying our U.S. forces from Iraq and refocusing our attention

on the global terrorist threats that face us. I filed an amendment that

requires the redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq by December 31,

2006. Unfortunately, the Senate will not be given the opportunity to

vote on this amendment if we invoke cloture on the emergency

supplemental bill we will be considering shortly.

I am afraid this body has failed time and time again to debate the

direction of our country's policy in Iraq. Three years ago, the

President landed on an aircraft carrier and, as we all remember,

declared ``Mission Accomplished'' in Iraq. Today, with thousands of

lives lost and billions of dollars spent, we are still no closer to a

policy that lifts the burden from our troops and taxpayers and actually

makes our country safer from the terrorist networks that seek to hurt

us.

By failing to discuss alternatives to the administration's failed

Iraq policy, we have let down this institution and our constituents. We

simply cannot continue to avoid asking the tough questions about Iraq.

We should not be appropriating billions of dollars for Iraq without

debating and demanding a strategy to complete our military mission

there, not when the lives of our soldiers and the safety of our country

are at risk.

Our military has performed heroically in Iraq, but the continued and

indefinite presence of large U.S. forces there significantly weakens

our ability to fight the global terrorism networks that threaten us

today.

That is why I filed an amendment requiring the Pentagon to draw up a

flexible time line for redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq by the end

of this year. The President has repeatedly failed to spell out for the

American people when we can expect our troops to redeploy from Iraq. He

has refused to provide a vision for ending our military mission in

Iraq, and as a result a growing majority of Americans have lost

confidence in our purpose, our direction, and our presence in Iraq.

Last August, I proposed a target date for withdrawal when I suggested

U.S. troops leave Iraq by the end of 2006. This amendment in part

reflects the fact that the administration has made no progress--no

progress whatsoever--in developing a clear vision for ending our

military mission, redeploying U.S. troops from Iraq, and refocusing on

the real national security threats that face our country.

My amendment spells out what an increasing number of military

intelligence and diplomatic officials have been saying for a very long

time: that a massive and seemingly indefinite U.S. presence in Iraq is

destabilizing and potentially damaging to Iraqi efforts to rebuild

their government and their country. Our presence in some ways is

generating instability in Iraq, and the less we make it clear that our

intent is to leave and to leave now, our presence can become more

harmful than it is helpful.

More important, though, is the fact that our current Iraq policy is

making the United States weaker, not stronger. We need to redeploy U.S.

forces from Iraq because, as a result of our current costly and

burdensome presence in Iraq, we are unable to direct our resources

worldwide to defeat the wide and growing network of terrorist

organizations that seek to harm Americans and America. This

administration has compounded its misguided decision to wage war in

Iraq by refusing to recognize the consequences of its actions, the

tremendous cost to our brave troops and their loved ones, the drain on

our financial resources, and the burden on our Nation's national

security sources and infrastructure, which are unable to focus on new

and emerging threats to our country.

I don't have to point very far to show how imbalanced and burdensome

are our policies in Iraq. While we have spent, according to the

Congressional Research Service, upwards of $6 billion per week during

Operation Iraqi Freedom and $1.3 billion per week during Operation

Enduring Freedom, we are spending a little more than $2 million--$2

million--annually--not weekly, annually--in Somalia, a known haven for

terrorists and criminals and a true threat to our national security.

This supplemental appropriation, if passed, will increase the cost of

this war to $320 billion, and rising.

This is simply unsustainable, and because the President has failed to

provide us with any semblance of a vision for when our troops will be

redeployed, we can expect more of the same in years to come; that is,

unless the Congress finally requires the administration to develop an

Iraq strategy that includes a flexible time line for redeploying our

troops by the end of 2006. My amendment recognizes the need to maintain

a minimal level of U.S. forces in Iraq beyond 2006. Those forces will

be needed for engaging directly and targeting counterterrorism

activities, training Iraq in security forces, and protecting essential

U.S. infrastructure and personnel.

It is time for Members of Congress to stand up to an administration

that continues to lead us astray on what has become an extremely costly

and mistaken war. We need to hold this administration accountable for

its neglect of urgent national security priorities in favor of staying

a flawed policy course in Iraq. We need to tell the administration that

it can't continue to send our men and women in uniform into harm's way

without a clear and convincing strategy for success.

Some have suggested that we should tie our military presence in Iraq

to whether Iraqis are able to form a unity government. While I share

their frustration with the status quo, I think the decisions about

troop presence should be based on what is best for our country's

national security. Making decisions about our troop levels contingent

on a political solution in Iraq doesn't make sense. Our troops should

not be held hostage to the failure to bring about a political solution

in Iraq.

So here is the bottom line: We need to refocus on fighting and

defeating the terrorist network that attacked this country on September

11, 2001, and that means placing our Iraq policy in the context of a

global effort rather than letting it dominate our security strategy and

drain vital security resources for an unlimited amount of time. The

President's Iraq-centric policies are preventing us from effectively

engaging serious threats around the world, including Iran, global

terrorist networks, and other emerging threats. We must change course

in Iraq, and we must change course now.

It is in this spirit that I filed this amendment to this supplemental

spending bill. If I am not allowed a vote on my amendment to the

supplemental, I can assure my colleagues that I will be looking for the

next opportunity to bring this amendment to the floor for debate and a

vote.

My colleagues are, of course, entitled to disagree with my approach.

I welcome their suggestions and their advice. But what I really want is

for the Senate to live up to its responsibility and engage in a serious

debate about the topic that is on the mind of every American: how to

put our Iraq policy right and our national security policy right.