Madam President, I wish to speak to the amendment that was

laid down by Senator Cochran from Mississippi, an amendment to strike

language from the bill that is pending before us, language that would

inhibit the ability of our commanders on the ground to carry out the

message we have asked them to perform in Iraq.

As we are all aware, this security supplemental is designed to

provide money for the conduct of our operations in Afghanistan and

Iraq. There is a timetable here. The commanders have said they need, by

April 15, the beginning part of this funding so they can carry out the

missions we have asked them to perform. When I was there about a month

ago, this message was given to me over and over when I would say: Is

there anything I can do for you: Senator make sure we get the funding

without the strings attached when we need that money.

So the President requested this security supplemental appropriations

bill. The House has acted. The Senate has the bill before us this week.

Madam President, this funding bill will do no good if it has

limitations imposed in it that prevent us from carrying out the

mission, and the President has already said if language that sets a

timetable for the withdrawal of our troops is included, he will be

forced to veto the bill. We understand that.

It makes no sense to me that we would go ahead and pass such a bill,

knowing the President will veto it, because there would be no way for

us to go back and redo it all before the April 15 time, when the troops

begin to need this money. Many have suggested that this is actually a

slow-bleed strategy on the part of some to put a poison pill in the

bill, forcing the President to veto it, knowing it means the troops

would not get the money they need when they need it. I would rather

like to think that this is a genuine point of view on the part of some

of my colleagues who believe we should put strings attached on this

funding and somehow that will provide a more clear way for us to

achieve our mission. I don't understand it, but I suspect somebody

could argue that.

What I would like to do is support Senator Cochran's amendment to

simply strike this language from the bill. If the President is able to

continue to carry out the Petraeus plan and we have funding to do that,

we will know soon enough whether it will enable us to achieve the

mission. By the summertime or thereabouts, if it appears this surge is

not working, then we will know that as well.

What I cannot understand is why anybody would want to pull the rug

out from under the troops just at the time it appears the President's

strategy is beginning to work. When I was there, there was already

cautious optimism, signs of success of the plan--nobody wants to

declare success or victory, of course, but that those elements of

success continue to be manifested and be reported on.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Record, at the

conclusion of my remarks, a piece by William Kristol and Frederick

Kagan from the Weekly Standard of April 2, 2007, entitled ``Wrong on

Timetables.''

Madam President, this piece by William Kristol and Frederick

Kagan tries to take the arguments that have been offered by the

opposition in favor of a timetable and demonstrate why those arguments

are incorrect. The first of the arguments is that the Iraqi Government

needs stimulus by us, or a threat by us, that if they don't hurry up

and do what they are supposed to do, we are going to pull out. This

kind of strings attached, therefore, makes some sense. They point out

the fact that, first of all, the resolution itself that was defeated in

this body a week or so ago by a vote of 48 to 50, that resolution,

which would have established timetables, was defeated, among other

things, because the Iraqis have already gotten the message.

It is not so much about sending a message to them as it is about

sending a message to our enemies and to our allies and to our own

troops, which says regardless of what you do, we are going to be out by

a certain date. The problem with the goals and with the specifics that

are supposed to be achieved, the benchmarks, so-called, in the

legislation is that it matters not how well the Iraqi Government

performs; we are still going to be out by a date certain. So it is not

the kind of message we want to send to the Iraqi Government and,

clearly, not the kind we want to send to our enemies who simply know

they have to just wait us out.

Another argument is that American forces would be able to fight al-

Qaida, and we don't need to be involved in the civil war of the Iraqis.

It would take a lawyer to figure that out. You are going to have to

have a lawyer with every squad on patrol to figure out whether they are

fighting al-Qaida or somebody else or what kind of action can be taken.

It is very hard to distinguish whom you are fighting when the fighting

is going on. Al-Qaida is definitely a problem. What did al-Qaida do?

They went over to bomb the Golden Mosque in Samarra, which got the

Shiites to decide they had to provide protection with militias, which

went over and attacked the Sunnis, who then went over and attacked the

Shiites and achieved the objective that al-Qaida wanted: to foment

violence among different factions within the country.

Where do you draw the line against fighting al-Qaida and someone else

if someone else is doing al-Qaida's bidding? It is a very convoluted

proposition. Clearly, you cannot have troops there to fight one

specific enemy but not another, especially when they are so difficult

to identify.

Finally, some think it is too late, that we have already lost, and we

might as well figure out a way to get out. I haven't heard my

colleagues talk that way because, under that scenario, you ought to cut

off funding today and not wait for the 6 or 8 or 10 months called for

under the resolution. As I said, the Senate defeated the virtually

identical provision 2 weeks ago. One of the reasons is because our

military is making progress. It is finding that, for example, in Sadr

City, the mayor of Sadr City essentially invited the Iraqi and

coalition forces in without a shot being fired. The forces of Moqtada

al-Sadr have either gone underground or disbanded. Al-Sadr himself is

believed to have gone to Iran. Prime Minister Maliki has made it clear

he is not going to relent against the forces of the Sadr army. He has

fired the Deputy Health Minister, one of Sadr's allies. He has turned a

deaf ear to the complaints of al-Sadr. He oversaw the cleaning out of

the Interior Ministry, which was a stronghold that was corrupting the

Iraqi police. He has worked with other coalition leaders to deploy the

Iraqi units pursuant to the Baghdad security plan. Interestingly, he

has also visited the sheik in Ramadi, which is the capital of Anbar

Province and formally the real base of al-Qaida operations, and has

gotten cooperation with the tribal leaders in that area to join us in

the effort against al-Qaida and other insurgents.

All of this is demonstrating cooperation of the Government in

Baghdad, clearly refuting the notion that somehow the American policy

has to be to threaten the Iraqis to cooperate with us or else we will

leave and the only way to do that is by expressing that through a

timetable. Clearly, the Iraqi Government is cooperating, and setting

arbitrary deadlines would send exactly the wrong message both to our

allies and, of course, to our enemies.

We need to express the view to our allies that we will be there to

protect them when the going gets tough. The enemy is not simply going

to lie down and allow this plan to continue to work. They will fight

back. As somebody said, there are going to be good days and bad days,

but our allies need to know that we will be there in the bad days and

that we won't set an absolute deadline for getting out.

The other point I made earlier is the services need this supplemental

appropriations bill, and that is why it is necessary for us to strike

provisions of section 1315, provisions which would deny that funding

without the strings that are attached.

To this point, I also alluded to the fact that section 1315 is

internally contradictory and self-defeating. As I said, it provides

benchmarks for the Iraqi leaders to meet and then says it doesn't

matter whether they meet them, we are out of here. The resolution would

not send any message that is constructive in any way and certainly is

not changing the behavior of the administration.

There are some who might believe they could support section 1315

because it is less restrictive than the House language. Indeed, it is

somewhat less restrictive, although essentially a distinction without a

difference.

This bill has to go to conference. There has been a great deal of

discussion by pundits and others that the more liberal element in the

House of Representatives is going to insist upon, at a bare minimum,

the language that passed the House of Representatives which they felt

was too moderate to begin with. We are likely to get change in a

conference that is language the President will have to veto, language

which is closer to the House language than the Senate language. I

think, therefore, Senators should not be acting under the illusion that

we can go ahead and pass this language and make sure that either in

conference everything gets taken out or at least this language, rather

than the more difficult House language, will be what is sent to the

President.

The reality is these are real bullets. This is not something with

which to play around. I don't think we can be voting for something just

because maybe in the conference committee we can try to make it a

little bit better.

Madam President, I wish to get to this point that will, perhaps, put

this in perspective. I can't remember another time in history when the

United States in the middle of a war has set a deadline and basically

told the world: We will be out by this specific date. To state the

proposition is to illustrate how odd and destructive a proposition it

is. If someone can come to the floor and tell me when this has been

done in the past and when it has had a salutary effect on the conflict,

I would be very interested and would certainly be willing to listen to

how that might have a positive effect here. But even colleagues on the

other side of the aisle several months ago expressed themselves on the

matter of timetables and deadlines, and they know who they are; they

acknowledge this is not the way to fight a war. One thing you cannot do

is tell the enemy when you are going to be leaving because it simply

allows the enemy to wait you out. Nothing has changed. That fact still

remains, and it seems almost inconceivable to me that Members now would

be deciding it is now OK to set a deadline and to set timetables.

Some might argue that it is just a goal, it is not a timetable. But

the reality is there are both embodied in this section which we seek to

strike. The beginning phrase is, ``The President shall commence the

phased redeployment of United States forces from Iraq not later than

120 days after the date of enactment of the act.'' That is not a

``maybe,'' it is not an ``if everything goes well'' or ``if everything

doesn't go well,'' it is a ``shall commence'' redeployment. The goal is

``with the goal of redeploying by March 31, 2008,'' but the ``shall

commence'' is pursuant to that goal. So you have to start it, and then

you keep going, and your goal is to get it done by March 31, 2008. The

only exception is for the limited purposes of leaving troops behind to

protect our infrastructure and coalition personnel, training and

equipping Iraqi forces, and conducting targeted counterterrorism

operations.

How do you decide how many troops you need to leave behind to conduct

targeted counterterrorism operations when virtually everything we are

doing in Iraq right now is counterterrorism? How do you decide we are

going to be able to cut, say, in half the number of troops and still be

able to effectively conduct targeted counterterrorism operations? If

you are driving down a street to conduct a targeted counterterrorism

operation and somebody begins firing on you, do you have to ask them

whether they are a terrorist before you can return fire? Do you turn

to your lawyer sitting in the humvee with you: I want to comply with

the law, so can I shoot back or not?

This is ludicrous. We cannot impose these kinds of conditions on our

troops in the middle of combat and expect them to perform their mission

safely. We send the best trained and best equipped troops into harm's

way, and we need to give them the other tool they need to prevail; that

is, the ability to carry out their mission as their commanders have

defined it for them, not as it is micromanaged by a bunch of lawyers in

Washington or Members of the Congress.

So, No. 1, this isn't just a wish that we redeploy. It begins ``shall

commence the phased redeployment not later than 120 days after the date

of enactment of this act,'' and the goal is to have it all done by

March 31 of next year. That is so destructive in the middle of war that

I just can't believe my colleagues would actually contemplate doing

that or that they can believe putting these kinds of limitations on our

troops is a realistic way to fight a war--conducting targeted

counterterrorism operations but not returning fire against, what,

against somebody defined as an insurgent, maybe? I don't understand it,

and I don't know how many lawyers it is going to take to understand it.

Our troops on the ground who are in the middle of a conflict certainly

are not going to be able to fight and defend themselves under

restrictions such as these, which is, I gather, precisely why the

President says he will have to veto it.

That gets me to my last point. I can understand why, Madam President,

if you felt this was a lost cause, you would want to just say: Let's

have a vote to get out and be done with it and not fund the troops. But

instead, there are some--and I am not suggesting in the Congress but

there are some who have talked about this as a very clever strategy.

They say the opponents of the President and the Congress are going to

be able to say they voted to support the troops because they voted for

a supplemental appropriations bill for that purpose, knowing all along,

however, that it is a false exercise because it puts restrictions on

the troops fighting the war that they can't possibly live with, so the

President has to veto it. But he will get the blame, not them.

Well, that is too clever by half. The American people understand

this. I urge, if any of my colleagues are considering supporting this

for that reason, that they fail to appreciate that the American people,

yes, would like to bring our troops home, they would like to see this

conflict ended, but, no, they do not want it to end with an American

defeat. They do not want to see us defeated and, most especially, I

can't imagine anybody who wants to have our troops continue the war for

a limited duration of time under rules which put them in great danger,

which is what this would do. So the President has to veto it.

What happens when he vetoes the bill, if this is the form in which we

pass it? We are now beyond April 15, the time the troops need the

money, and yet Congress has still not acted to provide the security

supplemental funding. The Defense Department now has to terminate

contracts so they can switch money from this account over to this

account and begin a very costly and time-consuming process of trying to

make do while Congress makes up its mind, to make sure they can get the

money to the troops so they can continue their operations.

Maybe secretly there are some out there who hope all of this will

gradually reduce the ability of the troops to perform their mission so

that it becomes a proposition where our strategy, even under the best

of circumstances, can't succeed. In other words, the Petraeus plan

fails because we couldn't get the support to the troops when they

needed the support.

I hope that certainly my colleagues in the House and Senate will not

buy into that proposition, will not pull the rug out from under our

troops just when it appears this plan is showing signs of success. That

slow-bleed strategy would not only ensure that we would lose everything

we have gained so far, including the prospect of a success, but that

our troops would be put in more danger now than they would be either by

supporting them or simply by leaving. It would leave them in a middle

ground, in the middle of a fire but without the ability to properly

defend themselves.

Maybe some believe that would force our hand and just bring them home

anyway, acknowledge defeat, and be done with it. I don't think that is

what the American people want. If anybody is thinking that is the

strategy behind this proposition, I think they are not only misreading

American public opinion but do not have the best interests of our

troops in mind.

Since that is the rationale behind this resolution, as offered by my

colleagues, I am sure that is not the case. But that is why we need to

strike this particular section from the bill.

We will talk later about some other items that need to be stricken as

well. It is amazing to me, and I won't get into all the pork that is in

this bill, but here we have a security supplemental, emergency funding

to support the troops, and we decide to lard it up with all manner of

items that are not emergencies, have nothing to do with supporting the

troops, but because everybody knows this is a must-pass bill, they

figure this is a real good opportunity for them to get things in the

bill that might otherwise be very difficult to pass in the Congress.

Just a couple ideas: $3.5 million related to guided tours of the U.S.

Capitol. I am all for guided tours of the U.S. Capitol, but is this an

emergency?

There is $13 million for mine safety research. I am sure mine safety

is important to research. Is this an emergency which can't be put in a

regular appropriations bill?

We are targeting funding for sugar beets. I presume I like sugar

beets--I am not sure--but I don't think it is an emergency for which we

need to spend $24 million.

There is another $3 million funding for sugarcane, which I understand

goes to one Hawaiian cooperative.

Here is something which would appeal to all the politicians: $100

million for security related to the Republican and Democratic

Presidential nominating conventions. Is that next month, Madam

President? I have forgotten. Nominating conventions would be in July

and August, not of this year but the following year--not exactly an

emergency we need to fund in an emergency security supplemental to

conduct this war.

Do my colleagues hear what I am saying? Politicians have decided this

is a good train to get on board because it has to move, we have to fund

the troops. Since it is hard for us to get the Senate and the House to

act on these items otherwise, we will just try to attach them to this

bill.

We will have other amendments to try to remove these extraneous

matters from this funding bill. But what I wanted to talk about today

was primarily my concern that if we don't strike this section which has

the timetables for withdrawal, then one of two things is going to

happen: Either the President vetoes the bill and it then takes us

forever to get a clean bill to the President, with the result that the

troops don't have the funding they need and the strategy that is

currently working becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for those who say

it can't work because they have denied the funds for it to work, or

these provisions remain and, of course, it is impossible to conduct

operations with these strings attached for our troops. Either way, it

is a heck of a way to fight a war. And it illustrates to me that we

ought not try to micromanage this conflict from the Halls of Congress.

We have plenty of other things that should occupy our time than

developing a strategy and the rules of engagement for fighting a war

when we have perfectly good people, such as General Petraeus who was

unanimously confirmed by this body, to develop a plan and see to it

that it is properly executed. We have sent him over to do it. I suggest

we give him and his troops the support they need to get the job done.

I would support the amendment of the Senator from Mississippi to

strike this section from the bill.

Madam President, I yield the floor.