Mr. President, last Friday I had the privilege of

attending and speaking before a ``Farewell Dinner'' in honor of LTG

David Petraeus at the Command and Staff College of the U.S. Army at

Fort Leavenworth, KS.

To say the least, it was quite an evening of tribute in behalf of the

general and his wife, who has become admired and beloved serving as the

Commanding General of the Army's Intellectual Center. I estimate there

were around 250 officers and their wives and many from the Leavenworth

community to pay tribute to General and Mrs. Petraeus, to wish them

well, and to express pride and confidence in the general's immediate

mission. He left for Iraq this past Monday, 2 days ago.

Throughout the evening I had the opportunity to again visit with

David Petraeus, his feelings about his new mission, his impressive

knowledge with regard to the war in Iraq, the history of the region,

and his understanding with regard to the nature of past wars of

insurgency and the insurgency we face in Iraq. While at the Command and

Staff school, he wrote the Army's new manual on counterterrorism. Let

me say as a former marine who helped write a similar manual years ago

for the U.S. Marine Corps, I find this man unique in his knowledge and

his command ability.

I made a few remarks at the dinner, and being a Senator, why, the

remarks turned into a speech with some additional strongly held beliefs

that I had penciled out in addition to my prepared remarks in behalf of

General and Mrs. Petraeus. I thought twice about saying some very frank

and candid views, but as everybody knows, marines don't hold back. So

concluding my comments, I was glad I said what I said in that virtually

everybody in the room--all 250--told me that I had said what they could

not say. Those who wear their officer rank on their shoulders or their

enlisted stripes on their sleeves in most cases do not comment on

policy decisions or politics no matter how strongly they feel. They

follow orders and they serve their country.

I feel somewhat the same trepidation today. However, I believe my

remarks to the general, his officer corps, veterans of previous wars,

are dead on to

the issue we face in this debate that we have been talking about here

on the floor of the Senate.

Before I express my views, I would stress I regret that we are at a

stalemate in this body allegedly debating the issue of vital national

security, and I think most in the Senate wish we could do just that and

do it with comity, cooperation and, yes, in bipartisan fashion. The

American people, who are concerned and frustrated and angry about the

war, would certainly appreciate that, but that is not the case.

This issue is wrapped around a partisan and political axle procedure.

My friends across the aisle insist that we debate and vote on one of

the three nonbinding resolutions regarding the war in Iraq, and only

that resolution. They wanted to debate and vote on the Warner

resolution and call it a day. The Warner resolution supports the troops

but not the mission. Let me repeat that: It supports the troops but not

the mission. That is a most unique position, to say the least, and that

is about as far as my colleagues across the aisle wish to wade in the

waters of withdrawal at this particular time.

I also mention it might be helpful if we could consider the Feingold

resolution. Senator Feingold's resolution actually does something and

should be considered in the Senate, as well. Others wish to debate and

vote upon the McCain resolution and the Gregg resolution, but we are

being denied that opportunity.

Now, to those in the press--of which I see none--those covering this

debate within the media, how on Earth can you describe this situation

by writing headlines in 15-second news sound bites, stating Republicans

had voted to stifle debate on the war? Yes, let's debate and vote on

the Warner resolution. That is entirely proper and right. But let's

also debate and vote on resolutions offered by Senators McCain and

Gregg and, perhaps, Feingold. By the way, I intend to vote for McCain

and Gregg if I get the chance. I do not share the resolution in regard

to Senator Feingold, but I defend his honor to introduce it and to

debate it.

We are not stifling or shutting down debate. They are. Hello up

there. Is there any way you can discern that? I can help you. I majored

in journalism. I used to be a newspaper editor. This is like playing

baseball with one strike and you are out. What happened to my other two

strikes? Well, sorry, back to the dugout. We are going to go to the

continuing resolution. We run this ball game.

In any case, in my remarks last Friday at Fort Leavenworth, I said to

General Petreaus and the crowd that was assembled in his honor:

Now, remember, these remarks came at a dinner for General Petreaus at

the U.S. Army Command and Staff College at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas.

So I said to the general: General Petreaus, you and I have not been

personally acquainted over a long period of years. Yet in our

relatively short span of time I have come to know you well. I have had

many stimulating and enjoyable conversations with you over a wide range

of issues--Lawrence of Arabia, the British experience in Iraq--so I

know full well you are exactly the right man for the job at the right

time.

Our brave young men and women in uniform deserve nothing but the very

best leadership, and they are getting it with General Petreaus.

I told him: You have captured America's imagination and enter this

job with an enormous reservoir of goodwill.

However, it is a paradox of enormous irony that the Senate confirmed

General Petreaus without a dissenting vote--not one--a vote of

confidence unique given today's controversy, turmoil, and times.

Yet, at the same time, the same Senators who give you their vote of

confidence are now in the business of proposing what I call ``confetti

resolutions,'' supporting you and the troops but not the mission you

are about to undertake. That, to me, is unprecedented for the Senate

and, to me, it is astounding. These resolutions are nonbinding. They

have no legislative impact. They are the so-called sense-of-the-Senate

resolutions--meaningless except for the message you wish to send to the

Executive and the folks back home or for whatever purpose you might

have a sense-of-the-Senate resolution. With all due respect, we have

crossed the Rubicon with regard to sending mixed messages to our

allies, our troops, the American people, the media, and, yes, our

adversaries. Don't forget our adversaries.

Words have consequences. Rest assured, unlike some of my colleagues,

our adversaries will read every word and try to figure out and analyze

each sentence of these resolutions. And I suspect they will scratch

their heads and try to discern the sense and the reading of a

resolution that states support for the troops and our new commander

with new rules of engagement with a limited timeframe for achieving and

reporting benchmarks of progress but that opposes the mission. That

mixed message should cause quite a bit of head scratching among the

estimated 31 terrorist organizations we have planning various attacks

around the world.

However, my real concern is that the Senate is not considering or

even talking about the probable consequences of these actions, let

alone our responsibilities should they happen. I make it clear, I don't

question the intent, purpose, or patriotism of any Senator, regardless

of the resolution, but I do question judgment and the law of unintended

effects. Bluntly put, with all of this debate with regard to nonbinding

resolutions, we appear like lemmings, splashing in a sea of public

concern, frustration, and anger over the war in Iraq. I understand

that.

In this regard, I should stress, I do not know of anybody in this

Senate or the House of Representatives or anyone in America who does

not want our troops home at the earliest possible date, and stability

in Iraq, if possible. That is not the issue.

When all of this confetti settles--and it is settling, apparently,

because we are going to a continuing resolution and we will not have a

vote on any of the resolutions--the end result of all this frenzy will

be: General, you and the troops have our solid support, but we don't

support your mission. However, press on, and good luck.

What kind of message is that? This is not a profile in courage. This

is not the Senate's finest hour. If we are going to debate and vote on

nonbinding resolutions, let's at least consider resolutions that will

send a clear message or that can be of useful purpose. In that regard,

we should consider the McCain resolution that lists benchmarks of

progress, that General Petreaus has told me would be useful in his

discussions with Prime Minister Maliki, certainly the Gregg resolution

that supports funding for our troops in harm's way. But that is the

killer in this debate because my colleagues across the aisle do not

want to vote on the Gregg resolution. Now we are not going to vote on

any resolution. The only thing we voted on was cloture.

As a matter of fact, I think we should vote on a resolution, as I

said before, proposed by Senator Feingold, a resolution that certainly

does something. I do not agree with his resolution, but he is at least

forthright and has the courage and sends a clear message.

As the former chairman of the Intelligence Committee in the Senate,

let me stress what has not happened in the Congress or the media and

has received very little public discussion regarding this challenge

that we face in Iraq. No one is talking about the consequences of what

will happen if we simply withdraw. And we may just do that because I do

not believe this war can or should be sustained if we do not see

progress in the next 6 months.

I would also like to point out that most of the time deadlines for

withdrawal that have been proposed or are in the nonbinding resolutions

mirror exactly the same time period that General Petreaus told the

Committee on Armed Services he would follow in reporting whether this

new effort is making measurable progress along the lines of the

benchmarks within the McCain resolution. The obvious question is, Who

can make a better judgment? Who can better make that judgment, General

Petreaus, in theater, or Senators conducting theater?

We have not discussed the difficult policy decisions that will

confront us if it becomes necessary to withdraw or even how to

withdraw. The reality is, what will we do when certain consequences

take place? These are the possible, if not probable, consequences we

should be confronting, debating, and explaining to the American people

and the media, even if some have a deaf ear. First, a dramatic increase

in sectarian violence quickly escalating to a civil war, not the civil

war that people say exists today but a real civil war and a

humanitarian disaster far more devastating than what is happening now;

Shia versus Shia, Sunni versus Sunni, Shia versus Sunni. What do we do?

Second, given a civil war and a struggle for control, we can expect

an incursion of Sunni troops from other Middle Eastern countries to

prevent an Iranian takeover of Iraq and the very real possibility of an

Iraq led by Muqtada al-Sadr whose street appeal will endanger their own

governments. When that happens, the war becomes regional. What do we

do?

Third, we can expect an Iraq dominated by Iran, thus completing a

Shia crescent with Iran and Iraq and Syria and Lebanon--and Lebanon is

going through its own problems, to say the least. Today, countries such

as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt are talking about building their own

nuclear programs, given Iran's nuclear ambitions and their

progress. Iran just refused inspectors from the IAEA. With the

possibility of Shia Muslims and Sunni Muslims each working to achieve

nuclear capability and weapons, what does Israel do? What do we do?

Fourth, Iraq will become a safe haven for terrorists. This time, it

is for real. No, not the 2002 NIE, National Intelligence Estimate, that

we all agree was an egregious error. What do we do?

Fifth, in their eyes, with defeat of the ``Great Satan'' only months

away--a clear signal by this body and perhaps inevitable--terrorists

around the world are already emboldened, waiting us out and planning

more attacks. That is, of course, if you believe what they say. So what

do we do?

Sixth, we can expect a perceived, if not real, lack of American

resolve in the eyes of adversaries and potential adversaries around the

world, resulting in additional national security threats. Read Putin

and Belarus; Kim Jong Il, with his penchant for missile launches on the

Fourth of July; read Hugo Chavez--the Southern Hemisphere's new

Castro--nationalizing his oil production and directly involved in five

different countries. What about American resolve? What do we do?

I realize in today's climate the obvious answer to ``What do we do?''

is simply to blame President Bush. But the point is that globally and

over the long term, this is not a Bush issue or a Democratic or

Republican issue or even how you feel about Iraq or the views of the

so-called international community.

Even as we argue about whether we debate and vote on one resolution

or three--or apparently just have a vote on cloture and say that is the

end of it--terrorist organizations and their second-generation

affiliates--guided and inspired--are plotting attacks against the

United States and throughout the world, even as I speak. It is obvious

we cannot really sustain the status quo in Iraq. But while we debate

how to proceed, they are not giving up.

Now, given the fact there were at least five successful attacks

killing Americans--and others that, thank God, were not successful--

before President Bush came to office and before military action in Iraq

and given the fact that this threat will face the next President--yes,

the next President--and future world leaders, surely, surely we can

figure out it makes no sense to fight each other when the terrorists,

then and now and in the future, do not kill according to party

affiliation, nationality, race, age, or gender. If you were on one of

those planes the terrorists were planning to send--nine of them--over

the Atlantic to American cities, and they went down and exploded in an

American city or simply went down in the ocean, it would not make any

difference if you were Democratic, Republican, liberal, conservative,

or anything--you would be dead. It would not make any difference.

We do not need a Republican approach to national security and the

war. We do not need a Democratic approach to national security and the

war. We need an American approach to our national security and the war

and our individual freedoms.

This is a time to engage in honest dialog to work together and think

through and agree on strategy that will defeat our enemies and make the

American people safe--look at those consequences of our actions that we

have not even discussed on what may happen--and, yes, bring our troops

home but in a way that we do not have to send them back.

My colleagues, I started my remarks by saying the majority of these

comments came from a speech I gave at the dinner honoring GEN David

Petraeus and his wife Holly at our Leavenworth Command and Staff

College in Kansas last Friday prior to David Petraeus leaving for Iraq

this Monday. I closed those remarks by saying I was confident that

under his leadership, this new mission with new rules of engagement,

our chances of success were greater because failure is not in David

Petraeus. It never has and it never will be. So America's destiny and

God's blessings are riding on the shoulders of GEN David Petraeus. And

I closed by saying I was proud to offer him my full support and to call

him a friend.

So I say to the leadership, with all due respect, and to all of my

colleagues, let us end this business of nonbinding resolutions and get

these confetti resolutions behind us. Vote on all four. Vote on all

three. But let's not have the headlines that Republicans are trying to

shut down debate on Iraq. That is just not the case. We should vote in

regard to the Warner resolution, the McCain resolution, the Gregg

resolution, and as far as I am concerned the Feingold resolution, if we

must. We have all had a chance now to discuss the war. We need to vote

on the three resolutions--maybe four--and come together with bipartisan

commitment--a difficult and perhaps impossible task but a task that

must be undertaken for the sake of our national security.

Mr. President, how much time do I have remaining?