Mr. President, I shall be joined by a number of

colleagues and the purpose of our taking this time is as follows: We

have decided to put in an amendment to H.J. Res. 20, amendment number

259 which will be printed in today's record. This amendment mirrors S.

Con. Res. 7, a resolution prepared by myself and others sometime last

week, which expresses certain concerns we have with regard to the

President's plan as announced on January 10 of this year.

This amendment, to H.J. Res. 20 is cosponsored by Mr. Levin, Ms.

Collins, Ben Nelson of Nebraska, Mr. Hagel, Ms. Snowe, Mr. Smith, Mr.

Biden, and as other Senators return to town, we may have further

cosponsors.

We are concerned that the fighting rages on throughout Iraq, and

particularly in Baghdad. It is very important that the Senate should,

as the greatest deliberative body--certainly in matters of war and

peace--in a prompt way address the issues regarding Iraq.

Our men and women in the Armed Forces are fighting bravely in that

conflict, as they are in conflicts elsewhere worldwide. Our concerns

are heartfelt, not driven by political motivation. As we gathered as a

group in the past 2 weeks to work on this, we took note of the fact

that the President, on January 10, in his message to the Nation

explicitly said that others could come forward with their ideas. I will

paraphrase it--the exact quote is in the amendment we are putting in

today--that he would take into consideration the views of others. So in

a very constructive and a respectful way, our group said we disagreed

with the President and we gave a series of points urging him to

consider those points as he begins to implement such plan as finally

devised throughout Iraq but most specifically in Baghdad.

We are very respectful of the fact that the plan put in by the

President was in three parts: a diplomatic part, an economic part, and

a military part. We explicitly stated in the resolution our support for

the diplomatic and economic parts, and we are hopeful it can be put

together in a timely fashion. There is some concern as to whether the

three main parts can progress together, unified, in this operation,

given the short timetable to implement it. So two parts of the program

we wholeheartedly support and so state in this amendment.

The concern is about the military section. We state the explicit

nature of our concerns. Some Senators have suggested the resolution

expresses matters which I can find no source whatsoever in the

resolution for those complaints. Nevertheless, I will address in the

course of this time each and every one of those concerns.

Indeed, on the weekend talk shows, one Senator said: My problem with

the Warner proposal and others that criticize the surge is, what is

your plan? All right. That is a legitimate question. I say that our

amendment states a clear strategy. It says as follows:

Secondly, the primary objective of the overall strategy in Iraq

should be to encourage Iraqi leaders to make political compromises that

will foster reconciliation and strengthen the unity government,

ultimately leading to improvements in the security situation.

Next, the military part of the strategy should focus on maintaining

the territorial integrity of Iraq, denying international terrorists a

safe haven, conducting counterterrorism operations, promoting regional

stability, supporting the Iraqi efforts to bring

greater security to Baghdad, and training and equipping Iraqi forces to

take full responsibility for their own security.

Likewise, another part of our amendment states:

Then we spell out a series of benchmarks. Such benchmarks should

include, but not be limited to, the deployment of that number of

additional Iraqi security forces as specified in the plan in Baghdad,

ensuring equitable distribution of resources of the Government of Iraq

without regard to the sect or ethnicity of recipients, enacting and

implementing legislation to ensure that the oil resources of Iraq

benefit Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, Kurds and other Iraqi citizens in an

equitable manner, and the authority of the Iraqi commanders to make

tactical and operational decisions without political intervention.

Further, some Senators have indicated, again incorrectly, that our

resolution either fails to recognize, or disagrees with all aspects of

the President's plan, namely the political and economic aspects, in

addition to the military part of his plan.

In fact, our resolution acknowledges directly that the President's

plan is multi-faceted. Our resolution states, whereas, on January 10,

2007, following consultations with the Iraqi Prime Minister, the

President announced a new strategy, which consists of three basic

elements: diplomatic, economic, and military.

As such, our resolution disagrees only with the military aspect of

the President's plan, and actually supports the diplomatic and economic

aspects of his plan.

Finally, some Senators have suggested that our resolution either

fails to support the troops, or threatens a cut-off in funding.

Actually, our resolution does neither. It states forcefully our support

for the troops: whereas, over 137,000 American military personnel are

currently serving in Iraq, like thousands of others since March 2003,

with the bravery and professionalism consistent with the finest

traditions of the United States Armed Forces, and are deserving of our

support of all Americans, which they have strongly; whereas, many

American service personnel have lost their lives, and many more have

been wounded, in Iraq, and the American people will always honor their

sacrifices and honor their families.

And our resolution, specifically protects funding for our troops in

the field and states: the Congress should not take any action that will

endanger United States military forces in the field, including the

elimination or reduction of funds for troops in the field, as such an

action with respect to funding would undermine their safety or harm

their effectiveness in pursuing their assigned missions.

In sum, our resolution aims not to contravene the Constitutional

authorities as Commander-in-Chief, but, rather, to accept the offer to

Congress made by the President on January 10, 2007 that, ``if members

have improvements that can be made, we will make them. If circumstances

change, we will adjust.''

It is clear that the United States' strategy and operations in Iraq

can only be sustained and achieved with support from the American

people and with a level of bipartisanship in Congress.

The purpose of this resolution is not to cut our forces or to set a

timetable for withdrawal, but, rather, to express the genuine concerns

of a number of Senators from both parties about the President's plan.

It is not meant to be confrontational, but instead to provide a sense

of bipartisanship resolve on our new strategy in Iraq. It follows many

of the conclusions of the Baker-Hamilton report by focusing on what is

truly in our national interest in Iraq, and spells those goals out in

detail.

I want to divide our time between colleagues. I will ask at this time

that the distinguished Senator from Nebraska, Mr. Hagel, be recognized

and that, following his comments, I shall be recognized again to give

the remainder of my remarks. I say on a personal note to the Senator

how much I valued our conversation over the weekend, together with our

distinguished colleague from Maine, after which we decided today to put

the language of S. Con. Res. 7 in as an amendment to the pending matter

before the Senate.

I yield the floor.

We had in our discussions, and Senator Collins joined in

this discussion--that we could not conceive--and that I, this Senator

from Virginia, could ever participate in a cutoff-of-funding in regards

to this situation in Iraq.

But back to historical precedents. I have this volume, the

``Encyclopedia of the United States Congress,'' compiled by 20 eminent

historians in 1995. And on this subject that the Senator addressed,

they said the following:

Clear documentation of the Senator's points in this very erudite

resource of the history of the Congress. I thank the Senator.

Mr. President, before the Senator leaves the floor, I

have another point of history. I find this fascinating. I hope,

hereafter, colleagues, pundits, and writers will at least recognize

that, and I repeat it. Senate Historian documents confirm the Senate

has been posing sense-of-the-Senate resolutions since 1789. Thus, our

Framers of the Constitution and those who served in the early

Congresses recognized the value of this type of resolution.

I yield the floor. I thank my distinguished colleague from Maine,

again, for her steadfast support and advice throughout this entire

process today, tomorrow, and well into the future.

Mr. President, I thank our colleague. I wonder if I could

ask our colleague a question before she departs? She made reference to

her trip and the discussions that she had with the senior commanders. I

would like to bring to her attention testimony that came before our

committee, of which the distinguished Senator from Maine is a member,

at which time we heard from the Commander of the United States Central

Command, General Abizaid.

In the course of his testimony to Congress on November 15, 2006--

right in the timeframe the Senator made her trip--I will quote him,

General Abizaid. The general said:

I say to my colleague, that quote captured my own visit, which was

just barely a month before that, when I came back and I described in my

public comments that the situation in Iraq was drifting sideways.

That was a very serious summary. But I said it because I felt

obligated to our troops who were fighting bravely and courageously and

with a level of professionalism that equals the finest hour in the 200-

plus-year history of our military--and the support their families give

them. I felt ever so strongly that we were obligated as a country to

reexamine our strategy and I called for that reexamination of strategy

and it has been done.

But I say to my colleague, General Abizaid's summary about the need

for more forces, does that not summarize what you learned on your trip?

Mr. President, I thank our colleague. I wonder if at this

point in the colloquy--and then I will yield the floor because I know

other Senators are anxious to speak--but we, the United States, the

military, and the taxpayers have trained and equipped over 300,000

Iraqi security forces composed of the professional Army, police, border

security, and a group of others. The thrust of our resolution

originally, and this one that is here, the amendment which is

identical, was to give the Iraqis this opportunity, which the Prime

Minister himself called for. He said: Give us the opportunity to show

that we can do this operation.

That is the basis on which we drew up the resolution. And in our

resolution we said two things: The responsibility for Iraq's internal

security and halting sectarian violence must rest primarily with the

Government of Iraq and Iraqi security forces. Then, specifically we

said in the conclusion: The United States military operations should,

as much as possible, be confined to the goals that are enumerated in

the previous paragraph and should charge--I repeat--charge the Iraqi

military with the primary mission of combating sectarian violence, and

that is in the Baghdad operation.

So I think those facts, our resolution, now referred to as an

amendment, absolutely parallels what we learned firsthand on our trips

into that region.

Mr. President, I see other Senators are waiting. I see the

distinguished senior Senator from Maine, Ms. Snowe.

I thank the Senator from Maine. The Senator mentioned the

bipartisan spirit. I am very pleased to state that Senator Levin, whom

I spoke with this afternoon, Senator Ben Nelson, who has been with us

steadily on this, and Senator Biden allowed with very extensive

enthusiasm to

have their names attached as cosponsors.

I thank my colleagues who have come over and participated in this

debate and others who have listened. I thank the distinguished Senator,

my good friend from Nebraska, for working so hard on this amendment. We

will fight on.

We may be idealists, but we will fight on for what we believe in and

the integrity of this institution because we firmly believe, to the

extent we can, forging a bipartisan consensus is the extent to which we

can hopefully regain the full confidence of the American people on what

we are doing in Iraq.

I agree with the President, we should not let it slip into a chaotic

situation, but we do have some different constructive thoughts as to

our strategy ahead.

I yield the floor.