Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Kansas, who made

the point well that we cannot afford to lose in Iraq. I thought my

colleagues, and maybe those who may be interested--if anybody is paying

attention and watching the floor--may be interested to hear what the

intelligence community said in public. It is rare we have public

hearings in the Intelligence Committee, but once a year at least we

have the worldwide threat hearing.

Last Thursday, we had that hearing and we spent about 5\1/2\ hours.

It was very informative and mostly dealt with Iraq. Present were the

Director of National Intelligence, Ambassador Negroponte; Director

Hayden of the CIA; Director of the DIA General Maples; Mr. Foote from

the State Department INR; and FBI Director Robert Mueller. Much of the

questioning was about what is going on in Iraq. I think the consensus

of the intelligence community was that while things have not gone well,

the new commitment by Prime Minister Maliki and the rest of his

Government--not just the Shia Prime Minister but the Kurds and the

Sunnis--was to take over and take ownership of ending the insurgency in

Iraq. That gave us the best hope of achieving a peaceful solution that

would leave Iraq a stable country--not perfect by any means, with no

guarantee of success, but this was the opportunity to get the three

major elements in Iraq--the Shia, Sunnis, and the Kurds--to come

together on what we believe will be and should be a long-term solution.

Frankly, one of the real problems we have had has been the reluctance

of the Iraqi Government to let us go in and eliminate Shia militia,

such as the Moqtada al-Sadr Mahdi army. This has been a serious

problem. The American forces have been held back. Now it is our

understanding--and the intelligence community believes what they have

told the policymakers in the executive branch--that this is now the

best chance, because they realize time is running out, that while our

commitment was strong to Iraq, it is not an unending one, infinite.

They are going to have to take control if they don't want to see

their country descend into chaos. So there was a lot of talk about the

pros and cons of the policy the President announced to turn over the

responsibility to the Iraqi military, for ending the insurgency in

Baghdad, and to send our troops into the Al Anbar province to deal with

radical Islamists, such as al-Qaida, who continue to stir up problems

and who we believe were responsible for the bombing of the Golden

Mosque in Samara, which escalated the insurgency.

So I asked another question and the answers, I thought, were very

telling. They were not covered in the media. I asked what if we decided

now or within 2 or 3 months to withdraw and turn it over to the Iraqi

Government, and the consensus was uniform and frightening.

Admiral Negroponte said:

Later, I went back and asked what it would mean in terms of the

worldwide terrorist threat of al-Qaida. Director Negroponte responded:

In other words, the No. 2 man under Osama bin Laden, Zawahiri, wrote

to the notorious, infamous butcher Zarqawi, who had beheaded Americans

and others on television, to tell him to cool it; we are trying to

establish a basis for al-Qaida to operate out of Iraq. This would be,

in Zawahiri's and bin Laden's own words, establishing the range of the

caliphate. What they mean by that is to establish a Taliban style of

government, such as we saw in Afghanistan, on a regionwide and

ultimately a global basis.

I asked General Maples about the impact of withdrawal, precipitous or

immediate, or politically, a timetable withdrawal, determined by what

we want in Washington, rather than what is available on the ground. He

said:

He went on to say there would be regional impacts and that there

would be a tremendous economic impact. He cited hydrocarbons and,

obviously, we know Iraq is very rich in oil reserves, and it would make

oil reserves available to fund the activities of al-Qaida and the

international radical Islamist terrorist movements. He also said it

would have an impact on the world market on oil, driving up the power

of oil. He concluded by saying it would give Iran the power to expand

its evil empire, which President Ahmadi-Nejad is urgently trying to

expand not only in the Middle East but throughout Latin America.

I think probably the best summary of the intelligence community

estimates of the impact of the choices--and we are talking about

choices--is there is nothing good in terms of choices. One option has

been put forward by President Bush. I happen to believe it is the best

available option to support the Iraqis who have committed to end the

insurgency, to bring the Sunnis into a government that would share in

the oil revenues and take responsibility for ending the insurgency,

while our troops go after the external forces, the terrorists coming in

from other countries and joining the al-Qaida movement.

I asked General Hayden to give me a concise statement of his view and

the view of the intelligence community on the second option, which

would be to

withdraw now, or to set a short timetable deadline in 2 or 3 months. I

will read what he said:

At that point, I commended him for being a master of understatement.

He went on to say:

I said, well, what would be the threat to the U.S. homeland? How does

that affect us in Washington, in Rhode Island, Missouri, Kansas, New

York, Los Angeles, and elsewhere? He said:

I have my views on this. This is the overwhelming consensus of the

intelligence community. There are no great options, but the best

option, they believe, is to provide American troops to support what the

Government of Iraq has pledged to do, and that is to end the

insurgency, to stop the Shia death squads, to cut the Sunnis in on a

fair share of the Government, and take responsibility not only for

clearing but for controlling the areas in Baghdad that have been the

problem. So I think as we talk about the options available, it is

vitally important that we listen to the intelligence community and

their best assessments of what happens if we follow the President's

plan or if we choose a course of continuing to do what we have been

doing, without assisting the Iraqis to take control of their

Government, or if we cut and run.

I ask unanimous consent that the transcripts which I cited be printed

in the Record.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in

the Record, as follows:

General Maples?

In other words, they could get the profit off of the

high price of oil.

General Hayden?

You have a masterful way of understating it.

Any threat do you see--what threat to the United

States homeland?

I suggest the absence of a quorum.