Mr. President, I have listened intently over the past

few weeks as the President, members of his Cabinet, and Members of this

Chamber have discussed Iraq, the war on terror, and ways to strengthen

our national security.

For years, now, I have opposed this administration's policies in Iraq

as a diversion from the fight against terrorism. But I have never been

so sure of the fact that this administration misunderstands the nature

of the threats that face our country. I am also surer than ever--and it

gives me no pleasure to say this--that this President is incapable of

developing and executing a national security strategy that will make

our country safer.

Unfortunately, Mr. President, because of our disproportionate focus

on Iraq, we are not using enough of our military and intelligence

capabilities for defeating al-Qaida and other terrorist networks around

the world, nor are we focusing sufficient attention on challenges we

face with countries such as Iran, North Korea, Syria, or even China.

While we have been distracted in Iraq, terrorist networks have

developed new capabilities and found new sources of support throughout

the world. We have seen terrorist attacks in India, Morocco, Turkey,

Afghanistan, Indonesia, Spain, Great Britain, and elsewhere. The

administration has failed to adequately address the terrorist safe

haven that has existed for years in Somalia or the recent instability

that has threatened to destabilize the region. And resurgent Taliban

forces are contributing to growing levels of instability in

Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the U.S. presence in Iraq is being used as a recruiting

tool for terrorist organizations from around the world. We heard the

testimony of Dr. Paul Pillar, former lead CIA analyst for the Middle-

East, a few weeks ago in front of the Foreign Relations Committee. He

said, and I quote:

Retired senior military officers have also weighed in against the

President's handling of this war. Retired commander of Central Command,

General Hoar, testified in front of the Foreign Relations Committee

last week. This is what the general said:

If we escalate our involvement in Iraq or continue the President's

course, that means keeping large numbers of U.S. military personnel in

Iraq indefinitely. It means continuing to ask our brave service members

to somehow provide a military solution to a political problem, one that

will require the will of the Iraqi people to resolve.

Escalating our involvement in Iraq also means that our military's

readiness levels will continue to deteriorate.

It means that a disproportionate level of our military resources will

continue to be focused on Iraq while terrorist networks strengthen

their efforts worldwide. The fight against the Taliban and al-Qaida in

Afghanistan, too, will continue to suffer, as it has since we invaded

Iraq. If we escalate our involvement in Iraq, we won't be able to

finish the job in Afghanistan.

Finally, the safety of our country would be uncertain, at best.

Terrorist organizations and insurgencies around the world will continue

to use our presence in Iraq as a rallying cry and recruiting slogan.

Terrorist networks will continue to increase their sophistication and

reach as our military capabilities are strained in Iraq.

These are only some of the costs of this ongoing war in Iraq. I have

not addressed the most fundamental cost of this war the loss of the

lives of our Nation's finest men and women, and the grief and suffering

that accompanies their sacrifice by their families. We have lost 3,075

men and women in uniform, and that number continues to rise.

These losses, and the damaging consequences to our national security,

are not justified, in my mind, because the war in Iraq was, and

remains, a war of choice. Some in this body, even those who have

questioned the initial rationale for the war, suggest that we have no

choice but to remain in Iraq indefinitely. Some here in this Chamber

suggest that there is no choice than to continue to give the President

deference, even when the result is damaging to our national security.

Some argue it isn't the role of Congress to even debate bringing an end

to this war.

That argument is mistaken. Congress has a choice, and a

responsibility, to determine whether we continue to allow this

President to devote so much of our resources to Iraq or whether we

listen to the American public and put an end to this war, begin

repairing our military, and devote our resources to waging a global

campaign against al-Qaida and its allies. We cannot do both. The

Constitution gives Congress the explicit power

These are direct quotes from the Constitution of the United

States. Yet to hear some in the administration talk, it is as if these

provisions were written in invisible ink. They were not. These powers

are a clear and direct statement from the Founders of our Republic that

Congress has authority to declare, to define, and ultimately, to end a

war.

Our Founders wisely kept the power to fund a war separate from the

power to conduct a war. In their brilliant design of our system of

government, Congress got the power of the purse, and the President got

the power of the sword. As James Madison wrote,

The President has made the wrong judgment about Iraq time and again,

first by taking us into war on a fraudulent basis, then by keeping our

brave troops in Iraq for nearly 4 years, and now by proceeding despite

the opposition of the Congress and the American people to put 21,500

more American troops into harm's way.

If and when Congress acts on the will of the American people by

ending our involvement in the Iraq war, Congress will be performing the

role assigned it by the Founding Fathers defining the nature of our

military commitments and acting as a check on a President whose

policies are weakening our Nation.

There is little doubt that decisive action from the Congress is

needed. Despite the results of the election and 2 months of study and

supposed consultation--during which experts and Members of Congress

from across the political spectrum argued for a new policy--the

President has decided to escalate the war. When asked whether he would

persist in this policy despite congressional opposition, he replied:

Last week Vice President Cheney was asked whether the nonbinding

resolution passed by the Foreign Relations Committee that will soon be

considered by the full Senate would deter the President from escalating

the war. He replied:

In the United States of America, the people are sovereign, not the

President. It is Congress's responsibility to challenge an

administration that persists in a war that is misguided and that the

country opposes. We cannot simply wring our hands and complain about

the administration's policy. We cannot just pass resolutions saying

And we can't stand idly by and tell

ourselves that it is the President's job to fix the mess he made. It is

our job to fix the mess, and if we don't do so we are abdicating our

responsibilities.

I have just introduced legislation, cosponsored by Senator Boxer,

which will prohibit the use of funds to continue the deployment of U.S.

forces in Iraq 6 months after enactment. By prohibiting funds after a

specific deadline, Congress can force the President to bring our forces

out of Iraq and out of harm's way.

This legislation will allow the President adequate time to redeploy

our troops safely from Iraq, and it will make specific exceptions for a

limited number of U.S. troops who must remain in Iraq to conduct

targeted counterterrorism and training missions and protect U.S.

personnel. It will not hurt our troops in any way--they will continue

receiving their equipment, training, and salaries. It will simply

prevent the President from continuing to deploy them to Iraq and will

provide a hard deadline for bringing them home. By passing this bill,

we can finally focus on repairing our military and countering the full

range of threats that we face around the world.

There is plenty of precedent for Congress exercising its

constitutional authority to stop U.S. involvement in armed conflict.

Just yesterday, I chaired a Judiciary Committee hearing entitled

Without exception, every witness--those called by the majority and

the minority--did not challenge the constitutionality of Congress's

authority to use the power of the purse to end a war. A number of the

witnesses went further and said that Congress has not only the

authority but the obligation to take specific actions that are in the

interest of the nation.

I would like to read one quote by Mr. Lou Fisher of the Library of

Congress. He said, and I quote:

There are significant historical precedents for this type of

legislation that I have introduced today.

In late December 1970, Congress prohibited the use of funds to

finance the introduction of ground combat troops into Cambodia or to

provide United States advisors to or for Cambodian military forces in

Cambodia.

In late June 1973, Congress set a date to cut off funds for combat

activities in South East Asia. The provision read, and I quote:

More recently, President Clinton signed into law language that

prohibited funding after March 31, 1994, for military operations in

Somalia, with certain limited exceptions. And in 1998, Congress passed

legislation including a provision that prohibited funding for Bosnia

after June 30, 1998, unless the President made certain assurances.

Many Members of this body are well aware of this history.

Unfortunately,

many Members of the Congress are still concerned that any effort to

limit the President's damaging policies in Iraq would have adverse

consequences.

Let me dispel a few myths that have been generated as a result of the

discussion about the use of the power of the purse.

Some have suggested that if Congress uses the power of the purse, our

brave troops in the field will somehow suffer or be hung out to dry.

This is completely false. Congress has the power to end funding for the

President's failed Iraq policy and force him to bring our troops home.

Nothing--nothing--will prevent the troops from receiving the body

armor, ammunition, and other resources they need to keep them safe

before, during, and after their redeployment. By forcing the President

to safely bring our forces out of Iraq, we will protect them, not harm

them.

Others have suggested that using the power of the purse is

micromanaging the war. Not so. It makes no sense to argue that once

Congress has authorized a war it cannot take steps to limit or end that

war. Setting a clear policy is not micromanaging; it is exactly what

the Constitution contemplates, as we have heard today. Congress has had

to use its power many times before, often when the executive branch was

ignoring the will of the American people. It has done so without

micromanaging and without endangering our soldiers.

Some have argued that cutting off funding would send the wrong

message to the troops. Our new Defense Secretary even made this

argument last week with respect to the nonbinding resolution now under

consideration. These claims are offensive and self-serving.

Congress has the responsibility in our constitutional system to stand

up to the President when he is using our military in a way that is

contrary to our national interest. If anything, Congress's failure to

act when the American people have lost confidence in the President's

policy would send a more dangerous and demoralizing message to our

troops--that Congress is willing to allow the President to pursue

damaging policies that are a threat to our national security and that

place them at risk.

Any effort to end funding for the war must ensure that our troops are

not put in even more danger and that important counterterrorism

missions are still carried out. Every Member of this body, without

exception, wants to protect our troops, and our country. But we can do

that while at the same time living up to our responsibility to stop the

President's ill-advised, ill-conceived, and poorly executed policies,

which are taking a devastating toll on our military and on our national

security. It is up to Congress to do what is right for our troops and

for our national security, which has been badly damaged by diverting so

many resources into Iraq.

As long as this President goes unchecked by Congress, our troops will

remain needlessly at risk, and our national security will be

compromised. Congress has the duty to stand up and use its power to

stop him. If Congress doesn't stop this war, it is not because it

doesn't have the power; It is because it doesn't have the will.