Mr. President, in a few moments we will recess to gather

on the steps of the Capitol. It is an annual event that commemorates 9/

11. The leaders have spoken to their memories of that day, and I

associate myself with their remarks and the sadness we all feel as we

reflect on the lives lost, some 3,000 Americans--to this blatant act of

terrorism.

We can all recall that moment. I can recall looking down the Mall

toward the Washington Monument and watching the black smoke billowing

across the Mall from the Pentagon because of the deadly crash there

that took the lives of passengers on that plane and innocent people

working in defense of America. That was a moment that will never be

forgotten.

Over the weekend there was an indication of a new memorial in New

York City that will commemorate 9/11 as well, and soon it will be open

as a lasting tribute to not only those who fell and the families we

grieve with, but also to the paramedics and first responders who did

such a remarkable and courageous job that day.

It is in keeping with that theme that we reflect today on what the

majority leader told us. We had a visit yesterday from the President of

the United States who spoke directly to the Senate Democratic caucus

and Republican caucus luncheons answering questions from Senators. The

President came to speak to us about the situation in Syria, about the

use of chemical weapons, the deadly impact it has had on innocent

people, and the obvious breach of norms of civilized conduct which the

world has agreed to for almost 100 years.

The President made it clear that we have a chance now, an opportunity

for a diplomatic solution because of the suggestion of the Russians

that the Syrians come forward, surrender their chemical weapons, submit

to inspections, and have real enforcement. Nations around the world are

working with the United States to craft a resolution for the United

Nations to consider. I am hopeful and I pray they will be successful.

If that occurs, the President will have achieved his goal without the

use of military force, which is something he made clear to us yesterday

that he hopes to pursue--achieving his goal without the use of military

force. Over and over again yesterday he told us: I am not a President

who looks forward to the use of military force. I don't want to do it

unless I have to. I believe that, because I know the man. I have known

him for many years and I know what is in his heart.

However, we have to acknowledge the obvious. Had the President not

raised the prospect of military force, this conversation on an

international level would never have occurred. It was the President's

leadership, even without majority support among the American people,

that precipitated this action by President Putin, and I hope it will

lead to a diplomatic solution. It is where it should be--in the United

Nations. It was only the threat of veto by Russia and China and the

Security Council which kept President Obama from turning to the United

Nations first. But we have a chance, and I pray it is successful.

We will now move forward with other items on the Senate agenda very

quickly, as we should, and still the possibility that if this

diplomatic effort fails, we will have to return to this critically

important debate about the future of Syria.

It is important to recall, though, even after the chemical weapons

are gone--and I pray that happens with diplomatic efforts soon--there

will still be a civil war in that country that has claimed 100,000

lives over the last several years. The sooner that comes to an end, the

better. The humanitarian crisis on the ground in Syria is terrible, but

the impact on surrounding nations is awful as well.

Last year I visited a refugee camp in Turkey where Syrians, fearing

for their lives, moved by the thousands into Turkey. I reflected on the

generosity and compassion of the people of Turkey, accepting 10,000

people in one of these refugee camps, providing for them shelter and

food and medical care and education for their children. It was an

amazing humanitarian gesture on their part.

Then we go to the nation of Jordan. Jordan is overrun with refugees

from the Middle East, and it has created serious economic challenges

for that country and threats to political stability. The sooner this

war ends in Syria, the sooner normalcy comes to the Middle East, the

better for Jordan and the better for the entire region. So we pray that

occurs soon.

This has been a rough few weeks as we have considered chemical

weapons in Syria. As Senator Reid said yesterday, the objects and

visions we saw on this film and video--the victims of these chemical

weapons--remind us of how horrible this is. When those who turn to

weapons of mass destruction are not held accountable, there are more

innocent victims.

I hope we can solve this issue on a diplomatic basis. We will stand

down now in terms of any congressional effort until that effort in the

United Nations has a chance to reach fruition, and I pray it will.