Mr. President, I relish this opportunity. We have before

us in the Senate this week, and probably next week, Department of

Defense reauthorization, a reauthorization that is critically important

because our men and women are deployed around the world carrying out

critical missions.

The Department of Defense reauthorization does some interesting and

some good things: an across-the-board 3.5-percent increase in the pay

for our men and women in the Armed Forces; an increase in our manning

document for the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Army to increase our

authorized levels; an important increase in funding and capital for

those bases and those States and those communities affected by the most

recent BRAC, which it is critically important to see to it, as we

reposition our military domestically, that those communities that are

affected have the capital and the resources to improve their

infrastructure to meet that pressure. Equally important is legislation

included that was introduced by Senator Chambliss of Georgia,

cosponsored by myself, to accelerate retirement benefits for Guardsmen

and Reservists deployed in combat, to let their deployments, as they

increase, accelerate the time in which they become eligible for their

retirement. These are all great benefits.

Unfortunately, we have no debate on the benefits, nor the need. We

continue to debate a question that was on the floor most of the month

of May when we did the Iraq emergency supplemental, a debate that is

scheduled following the report of General Petraeus in September. But

for a reason not sure to me, except political, we debate today

something we have already debated once before and will debate again in

60 days and that is the issue of whether we do a precipitous,

dangerous, scheduled withdrawal from the overall battle in Iraq today.

I wish to address the Levin-Reed amendment from two perspectives.

First is the role of Iraq and its battle in the overall global war on

terror, and secondly, the consequences of a scheduled, timed,

precipitous withdrawal from that battle. First of all, in terms of

beginning to withdraw in 120 days and being out by April, you send the

clear signal to those we are in combat with today, which is al-Qaida

and the insurgencies in Iraq--the enemies of freedom and liberty around

the world--you have scheduled the fact that we, in fact, are leaving.

You have offered them the opportunity, which they will seize, to

declare victory. In the end, the danger to America and the free world

is far greater following that than it is carrying out the tough battle

we have today.

I am reluctant to quote anything Osama bin Laden would ever say, but

in one of his speeches following the declared fatwah against freedom in

the West and America, he said simply: People will follow the strong

horse. That is exactly what they will do if we retreat. We may, in

fact, have to change our strategy. We may, in fact, reposition

ourselves, but we owe it to ourselves to do it when our generals have

reported back on their scheduled time. We do it on our timetable and

not as a retreat but as a strategy change. We did it earlier this year

and are now in the early stages of its implementation.

From a historical perspective, I wish to remind all of us what

happened in the last 50 years of the last century. Two great

Presidents, one a Republican and one a Democrat, both were confronted

with difficult times that threatened America and democracy as we know

it: John Kennedy, when the Soviet Union put missiles on the Cuban

island and, secondly, when the Iranians took our people as hostages,

communism was flourishing and Ronald Reagan was elected and had the

will and the courage to confront both. The results of the Cuban Missile

Crisis were we did not blink. President Kennedy blockaded the island of

Cuba, Khrushchev threatened, but he blinked and they withdrew and

missiles are not 90 miles off our shore today. In the case of Iran, and

their taking our hostages, and in the case of the Soviet Union,

President Reagan stood before the world and said:

Then he had the intestinal fortitude, through the

appropriations, to build up our military and the proposal of a mutually

shared defense of the United States of America and the free world to

finally get the Soviet Union to back away from communism, back down

from the Cold War, and today we have a much safer world.

The enemy we face today in the terrorists is no less a threat; they

are greater. The policy change our President made in 2001, 9 days after

the attack on 9/11, to change it from a reaction to a preemption was

precisely right, and the global war on terror and its central battle in

Iraq which has been declared so by al-Qaida is, in fact, a necessary

preemption in terms of terrorism.

The second point is the consequences of withdrawing precipitously and

on a posted schedule. No. 1, before the Foreign Relations Committee,

every expert from a Democrat to a Republican, Colin Powell to Madeleine

Albright; every institute, every think tank, every foreign Middle

Eastern expert said the following: We don't know if the surge will work

or what its success will be, but we will tell you this: if the United

States withdraws, there will be an outright civil war in the Middle

East, hundreds of thousands may die and, quite frankly, millions could,

in an uncontrolled, difficult time. If there is one place in the world

where that type of turmoil threatens the security of all freedom and

all mankind, it is the Middle East. Withdrawal in that case is

absolutely the wrong thing to do.

Secondly, when the Mujahedin and terrorists ran the Russians out of

Afghanistan, they created a safe haven for terror from which the

ultimate 9/11 attack came at America 20 years later. We should not

think for a minute that if we leave Iraq, left to the insurgency and

the terrorists, the same would not happen. But it wouldn't be 20 years

before the attack came against America; it might be a matter of months.

It is important for us to continue to pursue the goals of the surge,

give the President the chance to make the report this Thursday, General

Petraeus the chance to make the report this September, and then have a

debate; not in advance of the facts but after we know the facts as they

stand. This is too important. This is too important for America.

September 15 is an important date for us to judge the success of our

brave men and women who are carrying out the surge today. To declare a

retreat today on a timed, precipitous schedule is wrong for America, it

is wrong for our effort in the war on terror, and it strikes a dagger

in the heart of our new found policy of preemption.

So I appreciate the time the Senate has afforded me this morning. In

closing, I ask unanimous consent that a column on this very issue

written by Tony Blankley and appearing around the United States today,

being syndicated, be printed in the Record.

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

the Record, as follows:

I yield the floor.