But, Mr. President, the reason I rise today is to speak

because there was not time for me to speak on the supplemental we just

voted for.

Earlier this month, Congress sent the President an emergency spending

bill for Iraq. It provided the President with every single dollar our

troops needed and the President requested, and then some.

It also provided the American people a plan to bring this war to a

responsible end, including the language Senator Levin and I wrote,

which required to start to bring American troops home within 120 days,

have the bulk of our combat troops out of Iraq by March--it turned out

to be April 1 of 2008, and to, most importantly, limit the mission of

the smaller number that would remain to fighting al-Qaida and training

Iraqi troops.

In vetoing that bill, the President denied our troops funding they

needed and the American people the plan they want. When the President

did that, I urged, like others, that we send the bill back to him again

and again and again. But the hard reality is, we found out we did not

have the 53 votes we had the first time, that we did not have even 50

votes, that we would not be able to send it back. And ultimately, even

if we had the 50 votes, we probably did not have 60 votes to stop a

filibuster. We clearly do not have 67 votes to overcome another veto.

We do not have those votes either.

I do not like the bill we just voted on, the one I voted for. It

denies the American people a plan for a responsible way out of Iraq. It

would also start to cut off funds for the Iraqis if the benchmarks are

not met. What a silly idea. That would be self-defeating. We are trying

to build the Iraqi Army so we can get out of harm's way, and we are

going to tell the Iraqis, who have no possibility of getting themselves

together, if they do not, we are going to stop training them.

I would like nothing better than to have voted against this bill, but

I think we have to deal with the reality. The reality is, first, for

now, those of us who want to change course in Iraq do not have the 67

votes to override a Presidential veto. As long as the President refuses

to budge, the only way we can force him to change his policy in Iraq is

with 67 votes.

Well, we have 49 Democrats and one Independent on our side. We need

to bring 17 Republicans along all the way to our thinking, to the way a

strong majority of the American people are thinking. We are making

progress, but we are not there yet. So it is nice to talk about taking

a stand on this, but we do not have the votes, though. We do not have

the votes yet to turn our rhetoric into reality. That is the reality.

Secondly, I believe as long as we have troops on the front lines, it

is our shared responsibility to give them the equipment and protection

they need. The President may be prepared to play a game of political

chicken with the well-being of our troops, but I am not, and I will

not.

For example, if we do not get the money this bill provides into the

pipeline right now, we are not going to have a chance to build and

field the mine-resistant vehicles that are being so dearly sought after

by the Marine Corps and the rest of the services, and that I have been

fighting for. If we build these mine-resistant vehicles, the facts show

we can cut the deaths and casualties on the American side as a

consequence of these bombings by two-thirds.

We just voted earlier on this bill--because we were going to drag out

for 2 years the construction of these vehicles. In 2 years, another

2,000 people could die. They need to begin to be built now, and they

all must be built by the end of this year.

Under anyone's plan for Iraq--even those who advocate pulling every

single troop out of the country tomorrow--there is a reality: It would

take months to get them out. In the meantime, our troops are riding

around in humvees that are responsible for these roadside bombs: 70

percent--70 percent--70 percent--of the deaths and 70 percent of the

casualties.

As long as there is a single soldier there, I believe we have an

obligation, and speaking for myself, I will do everything to make sure

he or she has the best protection this country can provide. That is my

reality.

Third, I am prepared to cut funding to get our troops out of the

sectarian civil war in Iraq and to start bringing most of them home,

while limiting the mission of those who remain. That is why I voted for

the Reid-Feingold amendment last week. But I am not prepared to vote

for anything that cuts off 100 percent of the funding for all troops in

Iraq because everyone in this room knows there is going to be a

requirement--no matter what happens--to leave some troops in Iraq for a

while.

So what are we going to do? Cut funding off for them to satisfy what

is a very difficult--difficult--thing to explain to the vast majority

of the American people who do not understand why we are not out of this

war? We can and we must get most of our troops out by early next year.

But we still need a much smaller number. That is my reality as well.

I know this supplemental bill is a bitter pill to swallow for so many

Americans who believe, as I do, this war must end. I must tell you, in

my present pursuit, it is not a smart vote for me to make because it

requires explanation. But I do not believe people fully understand how

it is that the people voted in the Democratic Party in November of last

year, in large part to end this war, but we have not been able to do so

yet.

Well, like it or not, we have a system that protects the rights of

the minority and puts the burden on the majority in order to have its

way. It also creates a balance of power between the President and the

Congress. That is why it takes 60 votes in the Senate--not 51--to get

something done if the minority is determined not to have it done. That

is why it takes 67 votes in our Constitution to override a President's

veto. That is a reality. Not my reality--that is a constitutional

reality.

So where do those of us who are determined to end this war go from

here? Well, day after day, vote after vote, we must, and we will, work

to keep pressure on the Republicans to stop reflexively backing the

President and start supporting a responsible path out of Iraq--make

them vote against it again and again because, quite frankly, I do not

expect to change the President's mind. But I believe we can change the

mind of 17 Republicans.

Until that day comes--until that day comes--as long as this President

is President, the carnage and chaos and stupidity in the conduct of

this war is likely to continue. So I believe with every funding bill,

we are going to have to come back at every juncture and require people

to vote time and again against the will of American people in order to

change the attitude of my colleagues on the Republican side. That is

the reality. That is the reality that will bring this war to an end.

Like the most distinguished Member who serves in this body, the

Senator from West Virginia, I was here during the Vietnam war, at the

end. We all talk about how we cut off funds. We did not cut off funds

until the vast majority of the troops were already out. We did not cut

off funds until 1975. The reality was--the reality was--we did not do

it. It is an incredibly blunt instrument.

So I would have felt better, I would have had less to explain, and it

would have been easier, because I have been such a persistent critic, I

think most of my colleagues will acknowledge, for the 4\1/2\ years of

this war, to vote to cut off the funding. But as we head into the

Memorial Day recess, I want to remind my colleagues it is clearly time

for us to do our part as well to support our troops.

We in the Senate, and our colleagues in the House, and the military

leadership, the President, and the American people have an overriding,

overarching moral obligation to provide our forces, who are in the

middle of a war, with the full weight of this Nation's productive

capacity, and all that is humanly possible, as we send citizens to war,

to protect them. We have not done that. This administration has not

done that and has not asked for the money to do that. But we have to,

and we must. We must speak to one specific situation which I fear, if I

do not raise today and every day--as I have in the last 3 weeks--it

will not come to pass, it may not get done. It goes back to why I felt

I had to vote for this funding.

The issue is these mine-resistant vehicles, but it is bigger than

that. The issue is giving the men and women on the front lines a

dramatically better chance to survive. It is totally, completely within

our power to do that. We have the technology to do that. We have the

capacity to do that. We have the money to do that. We need only the

will to do that.

We have proven technically that our technology can, in fact, meet

this glaring deficiency that is killing so many of our troops. When I

say proven, I mean it. Let me be specific.

At the Aberdeen Proving Center, those folks have been working 24

hours a day, 7 days a week, for the past 3 months to fully test every

design and variation of the so-called MRAPs, mine-resistant ambush-

protected vehicles, vehicles that are out there. By next week, I am

told, they will have concrete test data that will back up the

purchasing decision the military will have to make.

We already know these mine-resistant vehicles give four to five times

more protection than uparmored HMMWVs. We already know the casualty and

death rate will go down by two-thirds if we have these mine-resistant

vehicles, which means we know we should be doing everything possible,

as rapidly as possible, because every day we waste one more life is in

jeopardy. We can save two-thirds of the lives being lost there--3,400

dead plus, and almost 24,000 severely wounded.

But why did these amazing test efforts only begin to happen this

year? Why are we only now starting to build these mine-resistant

vehicles? And why are we building them in such small quantities?

We learned this week the Marine commanders in Iraq in February of

2005--February of 2005--realized they needed these vehicles that have a

V-shaped hull. They are designed specifically to defeat what everybody

in America, unfortunately, has come to know about: IED, improvised

explosive devices. They are the roadside bombs and mines that we know

cause 70 percent of all the casualties and deaths.

Now, in February of 2005, the first characteristic these commanders

asked for--and I am quoting from the statement they sent to the

Pentagon called a Universal Needs Statement--they said: We need a

vehicle to

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may be able

to proceed for 3 more minutes.

The bottom line, in simple English, for nonphysicists is,

no matter how much you reinforce a flat-bottomed vehicle, when a bomb

goes off under the vehicle, it either penetrates the vehicle or

penetrates the vehicle, bounces back, and comes back up off the ground

again.

With these V-shaped vehicles, what happens is, when the blast goes

off--other than the very point of the V--it takes the blast and,

instead of it bouncing back on the ground and bouncing back up, it

shoots it off to the side, thereby increasing by two-thirds the

likelihood of survival.

No one should give us any of the malarkey I have heard from some in

the military and the administration about how any uparmored humvee

might have satisfied the need. The bottom line is, they cannot do what

these V-shaped vehicles can do.

Now, not only have these mine-resistant vehicles been fully tested at

Aberdeen, but our allies have been using similar technologies for

years. We are going to get down to the bottom of what happened in 2005.

But for now, let me get right to the chase. We have an overwhelming

moral obligation to build as many of these vehicles as rapidly as

possible and get them to the field as soon as possible--even if we are

pulling out every single troop in January. Between now and January, we

have an obligation to save lives. It is within our capability and

within our power to do so.

One more thing I would bring to the attention of my colleagues. I

also learned today--and we will soon find out--I learned today they

have also developed, out at the Aberdeen Proving Center, the capacity

to be able to thwart the ability of these things called EFPs,

explosively formed penetrators. That is going to cost a lot of money. I

hope I do not hear from anyone on this floor or anyone in the Congress

that, notwithstanding the fact we now have the technology, we are going

to wait down the road because it costs too much money to do it now or

it will take too much time, and we may have to leave--as one military

man said to me: We don't want to build all these. We are eventually

going to be coming home. We will have to leave them behind. That is a

little like Franklin Roosevelt saying, when asked to build landing

craft for the invasion of D-Day: We don't want to build too many of

these, it costs too much money, because we are going to have to leave

some behind.

I say to my colleagues and to the distinguished Senator from West

Virginia, Secretary Gates ended his press conference today by saying

there were competing interests for dollars. That may be true. But when

it comes to the life of an American soldier we know--we know--we know

for a fact we can protect, there is no other competing interest. There

is no other competing interest. Competing interests may exist, but

there is only one interest, and that is as this foolish war continues

under this President, our sons and daughters are being killed, and we

have the capacity right now to begin to build vehicles that will

diminish by two-thirds the casualty rate. There are no other competing

interests.

So I am going to continue to talk about this, I say to my colleagues,

and I hope once we get the final call from the Pentagon, no one here on

this floor will rise to tell me we can't afford to do this.

I thank my colleague from West Virginia for his extreme courtesy, as

always.

I yield the floor.