Mr. President, I spent the month of August on our break

traveling the State of Georgia and did it for a specific reason. I knew

that September 15 would be the report period for Ambassador Crocker and

for General Petraeus. I knew it was very important for me as a Senator

to go to the people of Georgia and find out what was on their minds.

As I introduced myself in every speech I made, I said: As a Member of

the Senate, and with our men and women deployed in harm's way, it is

absolutely incumbent upon me, first and foremost, to address the Iraq

war, to address my votes, and to hear from the people of Georgia on

what they feel.

When I returned to the Senate last night and I was on the floor, I

had the occasion to listen to a speech by the Senator from New York,

questioning, again, our involvement in Iraq and, even in advance of the

Petraeus report, taking a position that whatever it was, it would not

be good enough and the United States of America should withdraw. So I

thought today I would come to the floor and speak not only my mind but

I think the consensus of the people of Georgia regarding where we are

now and where we may be in the months ahead.

I visited civic clubs, chambers of commerce, garden clubs, the State

chamber of commerce and sat for a meaningful hour with Lucy and Rick

Harris, the parents of LT Noah Harris, who died 2 years ago fighting

for the United States of America in Iraq. I tried to get every

perspective. I even spent half a day with new recruits at Fort Benning

at the Third ID on their fourth day of basic training.

Next week is an important week for the United States of America, and

the report by General Petraeus is an important report. There are some

Members of the Senate who are invested in, whatever it says, staying

the course, there are some who are invested in coming home no matter

what it says, when, in fact our actions should lie between. We should

wait and hear what the general says. We should wait and hear what

Ambassador Crocker says. But also it is time for us to start thinking

about defining what victory is rather than declaring, as some have

done, that we have lost.

We all know there are positive words coming back from Iraq. We know

some positive things have happened. But we know it is not done, and we

know it is not over. But I think, in defining what victory is, it is

important to remember the speech the President of the United States

made the day before we all voted to authorize the engagement in Iraq

and enforcement of U.N. Resolution 1441.

The President established three precise goals for our involvement in

Iraq. No. 1 was to depose Saddam Hussein and find, if they existed, the

weapons of mass destruction that every nation in the world thought

Saddam Hussein had and U.N. Resolution 1441 delineated; second, to

allow the Iraqi people to hold free elections and establish a

government of their choosing; and the third goal was to adequately

train the Iraqi military so it could successfully defend and protect

that fledgling new Government.

On goal No. 1, Saddam Hussein was captured, he was deposed, he was

tried by the people of Iraq, and he was executed.

On the weapons of mass destruction, there are those who say we didn't

find them. We found all the components. The problem when you find a

weapon of mass destruction, when you have a smoking gun, it has already

gone off. So sometimes finding the components

is better. We did find Scud missiles buried in the sand between

Damascus and Baghdad in Iraq, we found traces of sarin gas, we found

mobile biological laboratories dismantled, and we found mass graves

where hundreds of thousands of Iraqis had been killed. The evidence was

there.

Second, in terms of the Government and establishing elections, the

Iraqi people in 18 months held three elections, wrote a constitution,

and established a government. Goal 2 accomplished.

Goal 3, to adequately train the Iraqi Army so it could defend the

people of Iraq and that fledgling government. I think it is very

instructive to recognize what has happened in recent days and in past

months. Yesterday, the British left Basra, and as they left Basra and

their post, who replaced them? Not the American military but the Iraqi

military, a clear and distinct sign that the Iraqi military is gaining

the ability to defend this fledgling country on their own.

Second, what happened 3 weeks ago. We finally captured and killed the

bomber who set off the mosque bombing that set off the sectarian

violence about a year and a half ago. Who captured him? Mr. President,

1,000 Iraqi troops with close air support by America, but the ground

action was the Iraqis. On the ``clear and hold and secure'' of the

surge, we have Americans and Iraqi soldiers embedded, side by side,

holding those parts of Baghdad that we have secured, holding them so

reconstruction can take place.

We are making positive steps, and we are on the cusp of the third

goal being accomplished. We are not there yet, but we are on the cusp

of it.

Where are we? We need to listen to what General Petraeus comes back

and recommends, and Ambassador Crocker. I will not prejudge what the

report will say because I have not seen it yet, but I think we all know

there is enough evidence that we are coming close that it is very

important we pay attention to the months ahead, which will be the most

critical in our engagement in Iraq.

To that end, I want to share a little bit of the advice of a good

friend to me, Lucy Harris, in Ellijay, GA. Lucy and I and her husband

Rick and her late son Noah's fiancee--he was killed in Iraq--sat with a

reporter and photographer from the Washington Post, and they recorded

our conversation that particular day for an article they wrote

recently. But I want to share with the Members the Senate some of the

advice Lucy gave to me. She lost her only son. Her only son was a

cheerleader at the University of Georgia on 9/11/2001 who, upon that

tragic day, walked up to the military ROTC on campus as a junior and

said: I want to join and get a commission.

They said:

He said

Finally, the Army reluctantly agreed, and sure enough, in 18 months

Noah Harris got his commission in ROTC and became a second lieutenant

in the U.S. military. He volunteered because he wanted to confront the

evil and terror he saw on that particular day.

He was known as the Beanie Baby soldier in Iraq. He led a platoon in

Iraq, and he carried, in one big pocket on his right leg, bullets, and

in another big pocket on his left leg he carried Beanie Babies, and he

shared them with the Iraqi kids as he would go through securing and

patrolling areas of Baghdad. His unit started carrying Beanie Babies

and other good things for the Iraqi kids. While defending freedom and

hopefully securing that country, he was also winning the minds of those

children.

Tragically, he was lost in the explosion of an IED in Iraq. I

attended his funeral and saw the outpouring of love from a thousand

people in his community. So when Lucy sat down last week in Ellijay,

GA, her advice to me was important and her advice to me was what

appears on their car's license plate: IDWIC, those letters, because her

son, Noah, who e-mailed back and forth with me before his tragic

passing, always said: IDWIC--I do what I can. That was his motto. That

is why he went to Iraq, to do what he could for freedom and democracy,

for peace and to end terror.

That is what his mom Lucy and Rick do today--they do what they can.

In their comments to the reporter, when asked what they think about all

the debate going on in Washington about Iraq, Lucy said: I think the

debate is healthy. I watch it. I think it is important. I think we

should all do what we can, but we need to make sure that my son Noah

did not die in vain.

To that end, as I approach the votes we will take--I don't know on

what, but I know it will be about Iraq--in the months and weeks ahead

following the Petraeus report, I will do what I can to give us a chance

to finish the job, win the victory the President outlined at the outset

5 years ago on our entering Iraq, and honor and pay tribute to the

sacrifice of the 3,700 or more Americans who have given their lives in

the effort of the overall war on terror and in particular the securing

of Iraq and the opportunity for a fledgling democracy to take hold in

the Middle East.

These are difficult times but not nearly as difficult for us as for

the men and women who voluntarily go because they believe in our cause.

I stand here today in the Senate hoping that all of us will not

prejudge what Ambassador Crocker will say, or General Petraeus, nor

should we declare defeat when we have victory within reach, nor should

we declare victory if it is not there. But we should move forward in

order to honor the sacrifice of the men and women who fight for our

country voluntarily every day.

For me, I am going to do what I can. I am going to take Lucy Harris

and Rick Harris and Ashley's advice. I am going to honor the life of

Noah by listening closely to the report, by recognizing why we went in

the first place, and see to it we give ourselves a chance to declare

the victory that has been so bravely fought for by the men and women of

the U.S. military.

I hope we will all have open minds and open hearts and give thanks

for the sacrifices taking place and recognize again why we went in the

first place and recognize again how close we are to achieving our

goals.

I yield the remainder of my time and suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for

the quorum call be rescinded.