Mr. President, as we approach the sixth anniversary of

September 11, 2001, we are reminded of the consequences of ignoring the

threat al-Qaida and other ``mufsidoon'' terrorists pose to our Nation.

Al-Qaida and radical extremists declared war, or ``Hirabah,'' on this

Nation in the early 1990s, and not until 2001 did we finally take that

threat seriously. While some in our own country refuse to believe this

reality, that terrorists--Osama bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri--agree

that Iraq is the central front in the war on terror, our entire

intelligence community testified in open session before the Senate

Intelligence Committee last January that to retreat from Iraq

prematurely on a political timetable would invite disaster. They

testified that a precipitous withdrawal of American forces would lead

to chaos, regional sectarian conflict, Shias and Sunnis killing each

other. It would create a safe haven from which al-Qaida could launch

further and much more robust attacks on America, and it could lead to

the possible deployment of troops, this time not to a fledgling

democracy but to prevent the spread of a radical Islamic Caliphate,

with a capital in Baghdad and borders reaching from Spain to Indonesia.

A precipitous withdrawal would also send a message to the enemies of

freedom all over the world that the American people lack the resolve to

win; that while our brave military cannot be defeated, politicians in

Washington can; that when the going gets tough, America gets going--

home.

Next week, General Petraeus will deliver a progress report on the new

strategy in Iraq. I expect this report to show that finally we are

seeing real progress in the security situation in several key areas.

This issue should not be a political one, but unfortunately there are

those who are politicizing our fight there. This battle is too

important to be used by those who want to declare defeat in Iraq for

their own short-term political gains in 2008, claims such as

and claims that the success of the surge

are troubling at best and dangerous at the worst.

Sadly, there are some in this body who are vested politically in

defeat. I find it disappointing that some in Congress would now say

they will refuse even to believe General Petraeus, despite the fact

Democrats and Republicans unanimously approved his appointment in

February.

General Petraeus takes his responsibility for our troops on the front

line seriously. He is highly respected, has an outstanding military

career, and should be listened to. I am confident he will deliver a

report based on facts on the ground and not political conditions at

home.

I hope more of my colleagues will listen to our military leaders when

they deliver Iraq's progress report. The worst case scenario would be

for a majority in Congress to ignore our military leaders and continue

to demand timetables, withdrawal dates, and attempts to control troop

movements. Military decisions must be made by our military commanders

on the ground, not micromanaged by Congress in our wonderful air-

conditioned hall, thousands of miles away.

We have seen what has happened in the past when politicians have

tried to run a war--from Vietnam to the Iranian hostage crisis.

On the political front, I agree that Prime Minister Maliki is not

getting the job done, at least not getting the job done on the

timetable that we have artificially set, but that much more work needs

to be done. However, as we have seen for months now, progress is

occurring from the bottom up at the local level. Our military, our

leaders, and our troops in the field tell us that they are being

successful. They are making progress. This is no time to quit.

The Al Anbar Province, where I and several Intelligence Committee

members visited a few months ago, has been demonstrating tremendous

signs of progress, even back then. This was the area controlled by al-

Qaida just a year ago, where al-Qaida said they were going to establish

the headquarters of their evil empire, the Caliphate.

In fact, today, General Jim Jones will be releasing his report that

reached the same conclusion I did after my visit. You saw different

headlines in the paper today about that report--not surprising. They

wanted to focus on other sites. But today's Washington Post reported:

It is here, where local tribal leaders and sheiks are cooperating

with American and Iraqi Army commanders to take their neighborhoods

back from al-Qaida. As a result, we have seen a decrease in sectarian

violence, an increase in weapons cache discoveries, and some relative

stability.

This is a classic example of how General Petraeus's counterinsurgency

strategy, or COIN strategy, is working.

We should have had this policy 2 or 3 years ago. But General Petraeus

has written a book, the Army and Marine field manual. When he talks

about dealing with the counterinsurgency, you go in, you clear, you

hold, you work with local forces, and you help

them rebuild. Show them that there is progress that can come when they

cooperate with those of us who are trying to prevent violence and

terrorism from taking over their country.

When we were there, the marines in Ramadi had just finished

rebuilding the Blue Mosque, the sacred point for Sunnis in Al Anbar,

and they are using that. We are working with them.

Our military is beginning to replicate these successful lessons in

other parts of Iraq. Sure progress is slow, but progress is real. With

a new counterinsurgency strategy in place, our military shows the

momentum going our way, and with this momentum it is clearly the wrong

time to cut the legs out from under them with a new strategy. We are

witnessing the increasing likelihood that our troops can find success

and return home victorious. Even previous critics such as the Brookings

Institution's O'Hanlon and Pollack, writing in the New York Times, said

this is But let me be very clear about one

thing.

Our U.S. national security interest is seeing relative peace and

stability established and maintained in Iraq for the short and

intermediate term because only by assuring that stability, and our

coalition forces working with Iraqi security forces, can we ensure we

will avoid the genocide among Shias and Sunni, the opening of Iraq to a

safe haven for al-Qaida and its related terrorist elements, and the

likelihood of a region wide sectarian war, bringing in other countries

in the region, creating havoc, chaos, threatening Israel, cutting off

oil supplies, and having an international crisis.

Long term, we have an interest in seeing real reconciliation and

political accommodation accomplished by the elected officials of the

Iraqi Government. Iraqis are going to have to make those decisions for

themselves--who does it and how they do it--but we have to realize that

before you can have political compromise and success, you have to have

stability.

Secondly, political reconciliation takes time. It took a long time to

put the United States of America together. If you read, as I hope you

have, the book about Lincoln's Presidency, you

see even in 1860-1864, we were still fighting those battles in a war at

the same time, but Abraham Lincoln persevered and we came through.

So not only as a policymaker but as a father concerned about our

future generations, I understand the tremendous sacrifice our troops

have made in support of a policy in Iraq. Our troops on the ground have

told me, in many different ways, they understand they are making

progress. They understand they are making these sacrifices; they are

willing to do this for the good of our country. One particular quote

sticks in my mind when they were first told about the possibility that

Congress would set arbitrary time limits for withdrawal. Their response

was: We have made far too many contributions and too many sacrifices to

see it all be for naught.

This coming from troops on the ground who have seen their colleagues

shot up and sent the belongings of lost comrades back home. They made a

contribution to the peace and security of the United States, and they

do not want us pulling the rug out from under them.

Let's remain committed to seeing the job done to protect this country

from the radical and extremist attacks of al-Qaida and others. Our

Nation's security, our credibility in the world, the freedom of

millions of Iraqis and many other people threatened by this kind of

terrorist attempt to establish a caliphate are depending upon us.

I urge my colleagues to listen carefully and accept the

recommendations of General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, two men of

unquestioned integrity who will be presenting the situation on the

ground, not as we view it on TV, not as some mischaracterize it but

from the people who have the responsibility for our missions, our

vitally important missions, important not only for Iraq and the Middle

East but to our own national security.

I yield the floor.