Mr. President, for weeks, I have been coming to the floor to

discuss the signs of progress we are beginning to see as the military

implements our new strategy in Iraq. Recent developments are

encouraging. They include the following:

First of all, the Iraqi Cabinet approved a national oil compact,

which is the beginning of a resolution of what to do with the revenues

that are produced from the oil that is produced in Iraq. It is a vital

step in ensuring a united Iraq, and Prime Minister Maliki called it a

``gift to all of the Iraqi people.'' This is expected to be approved by

the Iraqi legislature this spring.

Next is the capture recently of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, the leader of

al-Qaida in Iraq, the successor to al-Zarqawi, in the western outskirts

of Baghdad. This represents a continuing increase in the number of

terrorist chiefs who have been killed or captured.

Just last week, the Iraqi neighbors meeting was held. It generated a

lot of press because both U.S. and Iranian representatives were

present. It involved all 16 nations involved in the conflict. It was

the neighbors of Iraq, as well as countries such as Great Britain and

the United States. It was the largest meeting of foreign countries in

Iraq since the summit meeting of the Arab League members in March of

1990. There were working groups established to work on various problems

all the countries had--for example, refugees from Iraq who have gone

into Syria or Jordan. A special working group was created to try to

deal with that issue.

This represents a step forward, all of which illustrates the fact

that not only is the new strategy being implemented a military one but

it involves diplomatic and economic and political factors as well.

It was interesting that the Prime Minister toured Baghdad to

illustrate the security part of the new strategy that is beginning to

work. He had been largely confined to the relatively safe Green Zone,

as it is called, but on Sunday, he was able to go outside the wire to

tour a power station, visit with police, and shake hands with ordinary

Baghdad citizens. He attributed his newfound freedom of movement to the

success of the Baghdad security plan, and he committed to redouble his

efforts, saying: This operation will be accelerated at all levels in

numbers and weaponry; we will not back down.

You have also seen successes in places such as Sadr City, where it is

pretty clear that the Shiite militias have decided to stand down and

not contest the Iraqi and American forces.

In fact, at the conclusion of my remarks, I will have printed in the

Record two newspaper articles. One was written for the Washington Post

on March 11, called ``The `Surge' is Succeeding,'' by Robert Kagan.

While the leaders in Iraq are not yet willing to publicly say the surge

is succeeding, clearly evidence of that is on the ground, and at least

the media--journalists--are entitled to conclude from what is happening

that it is succeeding.

I was in Iraq a couple of weeks ago and was briefed by General

Odierno and General Petraeus, as well as others. They all were

cautiously optimistic that things were looking better on the ground.

They just wanted to caution that there would be good days and bad; that

the enemy has a say in this and they will strike back, certainly, all

they can. And if the administration were to claim too much in the way

of success too early and there was some kind of event that resulted in

a lot of violence, there might be a suggestion that the administration

was trying to put too nice a gloss on it. So the administration is

trying to downplay the successes. But the reality is that there is news

of success.

I think that makes all the more distressing and puzzling the effort

by a lot of our colleagues not only to downplay the potential for

success there but to develop strategies to undercut that success with

resolutions that would micromanage the war from the Senate and, indeed,

bind the hands of our commanders and our military as they begin to

implement this program.

It is hard for me to fathom the amount of time and energy that has

been put into the development of these various resolutions--at last

count, some 17 different resolutions--that would, in one way or

another, criticize the President's plan or try to find some way to stop

it from occurring.

What is further puzzling and distressing is the degree to which this

appears to be resulting from political considerations. Another one of

the pieces I am going to ask to print in the Record is an article from

March 12--that is today's Roll Call magazine--in which leaders on the

Democratic side are quoted as referring to the political aspects of

this strategy to try to get resolutions adopted.

The article talks about the Democratic leader's ``abandoning efforts

at crafting a bipartisan deal'' and ``instead look to directly tie

Republicans to the unpopular conflict. . . .''

The articles goes on to talk about ``the decision to ratchet up their

partisan rhetoric''--``their'' meaning Democratic partisan rhetoric--by

a resolution that sets ``specific dates for a mass redeployment of

troops in Iraq and creating new restrictions on the war effort,'' and,

indeed, that is what the latest resolution of the majority leader would

do.

But the article goes on to talk about this ``more aggressive push to

tar vulnerable Republicans up for re-election in 2008.'' That is not

what we should be all about in debating the war in Iraq and designing

solutions to ensure that war can be resolved successfully. It should

not be about trying to tar vulnerable Members of the opposition party

to diminish their reelection prospects in the year 2008.

The chairman of the Democratic Campaign Committee, the distinguished

senior Senator from New York, has, according to this Roll Call article,

``warned that Democrats would use the issue as a bludgeon on

Republicans up for reelection next year,'' and they quote him as

saying:

Adding:

To me, that is an illustration of something very wrong with the

Democratic Party's approach to this war. Reasonable people can differ

about whether we should be there and how we should conduct the

operations once there. But we ought to be able to agree that our

responsibility is to provide the funding or to cut it off. The

President's responsibility as Commander in Chief is to do his best to

see that the mission is achieved. That is what we are sending the

troops over there to do. That is what General Petraeus was sent there

to do. He was confirmed unanimously by this body a month or so ago.

When I was in Iraq, General Petraeus told us: Please see to it that

we have what we need to fulfill our mission. Pass the supplemental

appropriations bill to fund our effort and don't tie our hands with

micromanagement from the Senate.

This is the message from the person we sent over to do the job. It

seems to me this would be the wrong time to pull the rug out from under

him and pull the rug out from under the troops just as there are signs

of success, as I discussed earlier.

It is interesting, too, that there seem to be so many different

approaches to this effort to criticize the President and his plan. I

mentioned that at last count there are some 17 different resolutions.

Somebody called it the ``Goldilocks'' strategy, with the Democratic

leader searching for a solution that is neither too hot nor too cold.

The real question is: In the House of Representatives, are they going

to lose people on the left or the right or did they get it just right,

with sufficient numbers of projects in the supplemental appropriations

bill to appeal to those who may not like the end result with respect to

the Iraq part of the resolution?

Some have labeled it a ``slow bleed'' because it appears to be a

solution that doesn't cut off all the funding for the troops at this

moment but, rather, over time makes it impossible for us to succeed.

The resolution, as I understand it, says we have to begin withdrawing

our troops by a specific date and complete the withdrawal by another

specific date. In the past, there has been a fairly good bipartisan

consensus for the proposition that is the worst of all worlds, that you

don't want to set a timetable for withdrawal because it gives the enemy

precisely what they need to calibrate how long they have to hang in

there until you are gone and then they can move in and take over and

fill the vacuum. So it is a bad proposition, even apart from the

political motivation behind it.

It is worth, taking a look at some of the iterations.

We started with S. 2, a nonbinding resolution, that it wasn't in the

national interest of the United States to proceed. That was criticized

as being nonbinding.

Then we move on to S. Con. Res. 7 that expressed disagreement with

the plan. That didn't have sufficient support, so that was replaced by

S. 470, the Levin bill. It expressed disagreement with the strategy but

in a form the President would be forced to veto.

Then we moved on to the Reid-Pelosi proposal, S. 574. Not

surprisingly, this approach had no more support than the others, and so

we then moved on to the Biden-Levin proposal. That bill never even saw

the light of day. It wasn't even debated.

Now we are down to S. J. Res. 9, a nonbinding resolution encouraging

the President to redeploy all, or almost all, of the troops by the end

of 2008. This has been described as a goal, and yet the resolution

itself provides that it is much more than that; that the troops would,

in fact, have to begin being redeployed and be fully redeployed by the

end of March of 2008. I don't think this resolution will pass either

because, as I said, most people agree setting a timetable for

withdrawal is absolutely the worst thing you want to do, even if you

don't agree with the troops being there in the first place.

As I said earlier, the amount of time and effort consumed in trying

to craft the perfect Iraq resolution is difficult to square with all

the other important business we have to do. The majority

leader, the chairmen of the Armed Services and Foreign Relations

Committees, and other important Members of this body have devoted hours

and hours to making grammatical edits to this legislation, even though

none of it is going to pass.

Frankly, it is a good illustration of why wars should not be

micromanaged by Congress. We are not good at conducting wars. That is

why we have a Commander in Chief, that is why we have a Joint Chiefs of

Staff, that is why we have our military commanders, such as General

Petraeus, in whom we have placed a great deal of confidence, who have

the experience to conduct these kinds of operations.

I daresay, there are not many of us who have the experience of the

distinguished Presiding Officer, and it is important for us not to be

armchair quarterbacks when lives are on the line.

Iraq is perhaps the most critical issue facing our country at the

moment, and my comments are not meant to suggest that Iraq deserves

anything less than a full and fair debate on the floor. It is one

thing, however, to have a debate and let each side make its position

known and then vote on competing proposals. It is quite another to

devote this kind of energy to attempts which appear to be purely

political attempts to undercut the President and undercut the mission

in Iraq.

I believe the President has chosen a course that has the potential

for success. That is why I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks

some of the events which have been reported in the media that

demonstrate early success. I, frankly, urge my colleagues to turn their

energies to find ways to amplify these successes rather than to

undercut them.

It is interesting that Lee Hamilton, the chairman of the Baker-

Hamilton commission, who has been cited many times by Members on both

sides of the aisle, in testimony before the Congress has been insistent

that now that the President has laid out a plan, that strategy should

have a chance to succeed, that we should give it a chance to succeed.

By the way, even though the President at the time did not indicate

what he would be doing specifically, since that report has come out,

several of the recommendations have, in fact, been a part of what the

administration strategy is following. For example, the strategy of

meeting with people in the neighborhood is a followup on one of the

Baker-Hamilton recommendations.

I agree with cochairman Lee Hamilton that we should give the strategy

in Iraq a chance to succeed and not undercut it at the very moment it

appears there are early signs of success with a resolution which, as I

said, there had been a bipartisan consensus for that we shouldn't be

setting a timetable for withdrawal since that simply plays into enemy

hands.

The final document I will ask unanimous consent to be printed in the

Record when I conclude is a piece from the L.A. Times, dated today,

March 12. Headline: ``Do we really need a Gen. Pelosi?'' It refers, of

course, to the distinguished Speaker of the House of Representatives,

who is supporting the plan that has been put forth in the House of

Representatives by the Democratic leadership there. To quote from this

L.A. Times.com piece:

This comes from the Los Angeles Times, no particular friend of this

administration. The Times goes on to say that this kind of

micromanagement ``is the worst kind of congressional meddling in

military strategy.''

They go on to say:

Then they go on to criticize the Speaker and others for trying ``to

micromanage the conflict . . . with arbitrary timetables and

benchmarks.''

Concluding:

So a paper that does not like the war or support the administration

generally, nevertheless, recognizes it should not be micromanaged from

the Congress; that if there are any possibilities for it to succeed, we

should be following those possibilities.

To sum it up, I simply say this: There is a chance for this strategy

to succeed. We should give it a chance to succeed. Early signs are

positive. We should not try to micromanage the war from the Congress.

Therefore, when these resolutions come before us, we should reject them

and allow our military commanders the opportunity that we have asked

them to engage in to bring a successful conclusion to this war.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the articles to which I

referred be printed in the Record.

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

the Record, as follows: