Mr. President, I wish to point out some of the bitter

ironies of this debate.

Since roughly January, when the new majority took charge of this

Congress, there have been numerous proposals with regard to how we

should conduct ourselves in Iraq. I have tried to keep track of the

various resolutions that have been proposed and, as my colleagues can

see, there have been, according to my count, at least 17 resolutions.

They start with the Biden and Levin resolutions, the Reid-Pelosi

resolution, the Murtha resolution, the Biden-Levin resolution, the

Conrad funding cut resolution, a waiver plan, a timeline plan, the

Feingold resolution, the Obama resolution, the Clinton resolution, the

Dodd resolution, the Kennedy resolution, the Feinstein resolution, the

Byrd resolution, the Kerry resolution, and then the latest, the Reid

resolution we are on today.

Under this current iteration before the Senate, it says: The

President shall commence the phased redeployment of U.S. forces from

Iraq not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this

joint resolution, with the goal of redeploying by March 31, 2008, all

U.S. combat forces from Iraq, except for a limited number that are

essential for the following purposes: protecting U.S. and coalition

personnel and infrastructures, training and equipping Iraqi forces, and

conducting targeted counterterrorism operations.

The reason I find this list of resolutions--and now with the

culmination on March 15--somewhat ironic is we are beginning to see

some of the signs of success of the new plan, the Baghdad security plan

proposed by Prime Minister Maliki, with the support of the United

States.

For example, in the Associated Press yesterday, Robert Reid wrote

that bomb deaths have gone down 30 percent in Baghdad since the

security crackdown that began a month ago and that execution-style

slayings have been cut nearly in half.

I ask unanimous consent that the entire article be printed in the

Record following my remarks.

He goes on to say:

Consider this:

Mr. President, I think it is important to recognize that it has only

been since February 14 that this new security plan has been operating

and that Iraqi brigades and American surge forces are coming over the

period of months and will not finally be deployed there for some time

yet. Yet we are seeing some preliminary indications--nobody is claiming

success or victory, but there are some preliminary indications that the

plan is actually working. The article quotes MG William Caldwell, and I

share in the sentiments he expresses when he says:

We should also be cautious and patient and diligent, but we should

also recognize that progress is being made with this new plan proposed

by General Petraeus, embraced by the President and his new Secretary of

Defense, Robert Gates, and we should give it the chance to work.

That is precisely the reason I think this resolution is so misguided.

The idea that we have simply lost and we have to give up, with no

constructive alternative plan being suggested to deal with what will

occur. In all probability there will be massive ethnic cleansing and a

vast humanitarian crisis when the various sects continue to escalate

their conflict against one another, which likely will draw in other,

for example, Sunni majority nations such as Saudi Arabia to try to

protect the Sunni minority in Iraq, and Iran, a Shiite majority nation,

seeks to take advantage of the chaos there. Without the stabilizing

influence of the U.S. and our Iraqi allies and this new Iraq security

plan, it is probable that this troubled area of the world will descend

into a vast regional conflagration.

What I don't understand about this resolution is that there is

virtually not even a nod of the head or a tip of the hat to the fact

that, as Senator Levin pointed out, there are about 5,000 to 6,000 al-

Qaida foreign fighters in Al Anbar Province. This so-called phased

redeployment, which is just Washington-speak for getting out of town as

fast as you can, leaves a void, a power vacuum in this area where al-

Qaida can basically run wild and continue as they did in Afghanistan

before 9/11--to plan, recruit, train, and finance terrorist attacks and

launch them against the United States.

I am sure I wasn't the only one who was chilled at the testimony

released today in the newspapers of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, who

confessed to beheading Daniel Pearl, the Wall Street Journal reporter,

in Iraq and some 30 other terrorist attacks, including the attacks of

9/11. But how anybody in good conscience can advocate simply quitting

in Iraq with the threat of 5,000 to 6,000 al-Qaida foreign fighters

there, with the risk of a regional conflict, along with the tremendous

body blow that would cause to the American economy, I don't know. I

just don't understand it.

I was also surprised to see in today's New York Times some comments

by Senator Clinton, who, of course, is running for the Democratic

nomination for President. Notwithstanding this resolution and her

stated support for the resolution, she is quoted as saying she foresees

a ``remaining military as well as political mission'' in Iraq. If

elected President, she would keep a reduced military force there to

fight al-Qaida--I am glad to hear that--deter Iranian aggression,

protect the Kurds, and possibly support the Iraqi military.

It is a little troubling. While she says that would be her goal, it

appears to be inconsistent with this resolution that she also says she

will vote for. This is another quote in the article of March 15 in the

New York Times. She said:

This article says:

I don't know how that is consistent with this resolution. I don't

know how it is consistent with her other statement that she made on the

campaign trail when she said:

It is speculated in this article that what she is proposing is a

mirror image of a plan advocated by Dov S. Zakheim, a Pentagon

comptroller under Donald Rumsfeld. He estimated that no more than

75,000 troops would be required for the kind of plan she describes, as

opposed to the 160,000 troops the United States will have in Iraq once

the surge is complete. But I wonder whether it is wise to embrace a

plan proposed by the Pentagon's comptroller--in other words, the

Pentagon's numbers cruncher, the budget man, as opposed to the plan

proposed by GEN David Petraeus, who is an acknowledged expert in

counterinsurgency matters, the very kind of plan that is being executed

now with the Baghdad security planning--clearing, holding, and

building. I cannot understand how you would embrace a plan essentially

proposed by the Pentagon's bookkeeper as opposed to the Pentagon's best

generals.

I see the distinguished whip on the Senate floor. I will yield the

rest of our time to him.

I cannot understand why our friends on the majority side cannot make

up their minds. We have 17 resolutions and counting. It seems as if

each day brings a different plan but none to address the most urgent

needs for our national security in the Middle East.