Mr. President, during August, as many Members of this

body did, I traveled to Iraq, met with Tennesseans there, met with

General Petraeus, General Odierno. Then I traveled to Tennessee and

discussed my visit and listened.

I want to talk for a few minutes about where I believe we should go

from here in Iraq. The strongest message I received, both in Iraq and

in Tennessee, was this--not that we get out, not that we even win a

victory of the kind we won in Japan or Germany, but it is time for the

United States Government to speak with one voice on Iraq.

A retired four star general from Tennessee, who has a lot of

experience with the special forces, put it this way to me: He said our

biggest problem in Iraq is we are divided and the enemy knows it.

It is inexcusable that we in the Senate should spend so much time

lecturing political leaders in Baghdad for their failure to come up

with a consensus when we ourselves have not been able to come up with a

consensus about Iraq.

It is time for the Government to speak with a single voice about

where we go from here in Iraq. Our troops deserve it and our enemy

needs to hear it. I believe that one voice would be a new strategy to

change our mission in Iraq from combat to supporting, equipping, and

training the Iraqi troops, and then stabilizing Iraq province by

province, neighborhood by neighborhood, tribe by tribe.

If we adopt this new strategy as a nation, and if we speak clearly to

our troops and to the enemy with one voice, I believe this would likely

bring home half our troops within a year or two.

Such a new strategy would put us on a path to finish responsibly what

we have undertaken in Iraq. I believe there is a consensus within this

body for such a new strategy. I believe that consensus is sitting there

staring us in the face.

The strategy I am describing would implement the unanimous

recommendations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group chaired by former

Secretary of State Jim Baker, a Republican, and former Congressman Lee

Hamilton, a Democrat. It would take into account the lessons and

successes of the last few months under the leadership of General

Petraeus in Iraq.

Basically the new strategy I am describing would implement the

recommendations of Baker-Hamilton province by province. The Baker-

Hamilton strategy, the one I am describing, would be grounded upon

three basic principles. First, the United States will begin immediately

to move our forces in Iraq out of direct combat and into roles of

support, training, and providing equipment as security conditions on

the ground permit.

This will proceed province by province as Iraqis demonstrate their

capacity to manage their own security as they have, for example, in

Anbar Province where President Bush visited yesterday.

Generals Petraeus and Odierno told a group of us Senators about 10

days ago that they believe that 6 or 7 provinces are on the way to

being ready for this sort of mission change and this sort of

stabilization. We have seen it in Anbar. We saw it in northern Baghdad

where we flew by helicopter to an edge of Baghdad where about 70

American troops were living in a neighborhood. We had dinner with two

Sunni sheiks, two Shiite sheiks, and we talked about the progress

there.

What had happened is that the Iraqis had simply become exhausted with

terrorists of various kinds killing their relatives and terrorizing

their neighborhoods. One of the sheiks with whom we had dinner had seen

his teenage son murdered in his front yard.

When sufficient American forces, coalition forces, had come to the

neighborhood to work with the fed-up Iraqis, they had proceeded

basically to run the terrorists out of town. It was much easier for

them to tell, as they said, who are bad guys than for us to tell who

they are. They described them as various groups of thugs, criminals,

insurgents, militias, all there for no good. But when the Iraqis began

to man the checkpoints and when Iraqis worked on the neighborhood

watch, and when 600 of their sons were sent to Baghdad to the police

academy, as had been done with the prospect that they would then come

back and help, then the American officers there said: It may not be

long before we are able to shift our mission from combat to

support, equipping, and training of the Iraqi troops for this area.

Now, that is not to say that means instantly in every part of Iraq

things will be safe. They certainly were not while we were there. Two

province governors were assassinated within a 2-week period of time

just before we came. Fourteen Americans lost their lives in a

helicopter crash 2 days before we were there. On the day we were there,

we found out later, two suicide bombers had gone to the nearest other

outpost such as the one we visited and killed 4 people and wounded 11

others.

There is plenty of danger left in Iraq. But there is no mistaking the

fact that when we begin to see--and under Petraeus's leadership we

begin to have--those outposts around Baghdad, and work with the Iraqis

in certain parts of the country, significant military progress is being

made.

So the first principle of a new strategy would be to change the

mission of

our troops province by province. The second principle would be to

maintain a long-term presence in Iraq but one that would steadily

diminish over time.

The troops who would remain would be there to keep Iraq from turning

into a terrorist haven--troops who would be embedded with training

Iraqi Army units and police, those troops necessary for force

protection and for search and rescue and for intelligence.

The final principle would be we would step up regional and diplomatic

efforts to press others in the region to help Iraq succeed. Those

efforts are now well underway with a more expansive United Nations

assistance mission for Iraq.

There is plenty of evidence that a new strategy such as the one I

have described can attract a consensus here in the Senate and in the

Congress, and I believe in the country. To begin with, while he has not

adopted the Baker-Hamilton recommendation, the President has praised

the report and has adopted parts of the report. The Democratic

leadership has adopted many parts of the report and, in fact, the main

difference, it seems, separating that side and this side in coming to a

consensus is whether there should be a specific deadline, which the

Baker-Hamilton commission rejects.

Some have said, well, that means the Baker-Hamilton recommendations

are toothless, do not have effect. Well, I see the Senator from West

Virginia here. He will remember exactly what I am about to say. My

grandfather was a railway engineer for the Santa Fe Railway. His job

was to drive large locomotives onto what was then called a roundtable.

The roundtable's job was to turn that huge locomotive around and head

down a different track in a different direction. Once the roundtable

had turned the locomotive around and put it on a different track, there

was no getting on the other track. You might not know exactly how fast

it would go down the new track, and you might have different engineers,

but it was headed down a different track. I believe the Baker-Hamilton

recommendations, as updated by General Petraeus's experiences, would

begin to put our country on a new track with a new strategy in Iraq

that would cause us responsibly to finish our job there and could begin

to develop a consensus on both sides of the aisle.

In the Congress there is now bipartisan legislation that would make

the Iraq Study Group recommendations our national policy. In the

Senate, the legislation sponsored by the Senator from Colorado, Senator

Salazar, a Democrat, and myself, has 15 sponsors, 8 Democrats and 7

Republicans. In the House of Representatives, the Udall-Wolf

legislation, the same legislation as Salazar-Alexander, has 60

sponsors, 26 Democrats, and 34 Republicans.

If the President of the United States and the Democratic leadership

in the Senate supported this bipartisan legislation, I am convinced it

would get 75 votes and we would speak with one voice on Iraq to our

troops and to our enemy. If the President and the Democratic leadership

simply did not oppose this legislation, I believe it would attract a

majority of votes in the Senate, maybe 60 votes. The Congress could

enact this legislation by the end of the month. The President could

sign it immediately. He could then begin to implement its

recommendations moving us in a new strategy down a different track in

Iraq and report to us, as the legislation requires, every 90 days.

This is not a perfect option. The Baker-Hamilton group is 10

distinguished Americans--including Ed Meese, President Reagan's

Attorney General; Vernon Jordan, from the National Urban League; Larry

Eagleburger, Sandra Day O'Connor, President Clinton's Secretary of

Defense, President Clinton's former chief of staff, Secretary Baker,

Chairman Hamilton; Chuck Robb, a former Member of this body; Alan

Simpson, a former Member of this body--a very diverse group, five

Democrats, five Republicans. They met for 9 months. They were unanimous

on their 79 recommendations. That did not mean they agreed with every

single recommendation. But, taken as a whole, they said we can go from

here to there in Iraq. This is how we do it. This is how we go.

What are the other options? I can understand the Democratic leader

wanting to have a vote on withdrawal immediately with a deadline. Many

Members, maybe every Member on the other side, would vote for that. I

respect that. But I would respectfully say we are not going to have a

consensus on that approach. Too many of us believe it would strand

people who had been loyal in Iraq. Too many of us believe it would not

sufficiently honor the lives and the treasure we have invested in Iraq.

Too many of us believe there is too great a risk of turning over Iraq

to terrorists. And if none of those arguments make a difference, it is

simply logistically impossible to move 160,000 American soldiers and

marines and airmen out of Iraq overnight. So for all those reasons,

while we might have a vote on withdrawal immediately with a deadline,

there can't be the kind of consensus that we need in the Senate.

On the other hand, I can understand those, many on this side, who say

we should stay the course for a victory in Iraq. But this is not Japan

or Germany. After World War II, we had millions of troops in Japan and

Germany for a long time. We had an entire division in Germany which did

nothing but wait to see where their might be trouble and then go to

snuff it out. We were working with two countries which were homogeneous

and which had been nations for a long time. We didn't have there the

same circumstances we have in Iraq. There is not the possibility of the

same kind of victory in Iraq that we had in Japan and Germany. We are

spending $2 billion plus a week. We are losing two to three American

lives each day. Our armed services are stretched thin. Most of the

soldiers I talked with--and they are not complaining--were there for

their second or third tour of duty, and some were expecting to come

back again.

Finally, I don't believe we can sustain a stay-the-course policy in

Iraq because there is not the support for that among the American

people.

I suppose there is another option that one could try. The President

and some on the ground in Iraq might be tempted to simply say: Let's

continue the surge for a while longer because already in some places,

as I have described--in Anbar Province, in four or five others, in

northern Baghdad where we were--already in some places there is

demonstration that we are having some military success. But a surge

would be open-ended, a surge by itself. A surge is a tactic; it is not

a strategy. We need a strategy about where we go from here.

When I go back to Tennessee, I don't have Tennesseans rushing up to

me to tell me what to do about Iraq. They expect me to have some idea

about what to do about Iraq, to say where we go from here, and then

they will critique that and tell me whether they agree.

I believe there is not sufficient public support for the President

simply to go before the American people and say: Let's continue the

surge. We know if we put 25,000, 30,000, 40,000, 50,000 of our

tremendous American troops in a particular place in Iraq, there will be

some good results. We have already seen it. But a surge by itself does

not answer the question. In fact, it never has answered the question:

Where do we go from here in Iraq? How do we finish the job responsibly?

That is the question.

The surge can be a part of the new strategy. The Baker-Hamilton

recommendations in December specifically said that as they called for a

new strategy that included change of mission. But a surge was a tactic,

a part of the strategy, not the strategy itself.

If none of those options are promising for a consensus within this

body and in the House of Representatives and the country, then where

does that leave us? It leaves us somewhere in the middle, which is

often, in a democracy, the right place to be. My father used to say:

Finish what you start. We need to finish the job in Iraq.

George Reedy, Lyndon Johnson's Press Secretary, wrote a book,

``Twilight of the Presidents,'' in which he described the job of the

President--see an urgent need, develop the right strategy, but, third,

persuade at least half the people he is right. We can and no doubt will

have votes in this body on withdrawal with a deadline. We will probably

have votes on stay the course and victory. We will probably have a vote

on indefinite continuation of the surge. But there is not a possibility

of consensus on any of these approaches.

There is a good prospect for consensus on a strategy based upon the

Baker-Hamilton principles, updated by the lessons and successes of

General Petraeus. If the 10 members of the Iraq Study Group, the Baker-

Hamilton group, over 9 months could agree unanimously on where we go

from here in Iraq, surely 50 or 60 or 70 of us can agree on where we go

from here in Iraq.

I look forward to the President's report. I look forward to General

Petraeus's recommendations. He has demonstrated that he is an

exceptional leader. We Tennesseans have a special pride in him because

of his leadership of the 101st Airborne Division. But once

General Petraeus has made those recommendations, I hope the President

takes a page from a former President of this country whom President

Bush admires, Harry Truman.

In 1947, Harry Truman found himself in about the same shape President

Bush finds himself today. Americans were tired of war, even though in

that case we had won it. The President's poll numbers were very low.

The President had lost both Houses of Congress in the preceding

election. The President had an urgent overseas mission that he hoped

our country would adopt. According to David McCullough, the biographer

of President Truman, Truman said if he sent a plan with his name on it

up there to the Senate and the House, it would quiver a couple of times

and die. So he called in General George C. Marshall who was his

Secretary of State, and he called in Dean Acheson. He said: Let's call

it the Marshall plan and go up to Arthur Vandenberg, the leader of the

opposition in the Senate, and try to persuade him it is the right thing

to do.

We got the Marshall plan, and Truman today is remembered as a near

great President. I am certain that President Bush believes as firmly in

his heart that finishing the job in Iraq is as essential today as

President Truman believed the Marshall plan was essential in 1947. But

President Bush, I hope, will also remember the lesson of Harry Truman

and borrow the recommendations and the prestige of the Baker-Hamilton

group and borrow the lessons and successes of a distinguished general--

in this case General Petraeus--and give us a plan that is a genuinely

new strategy, one that can attract significant support on that side of

the aisle as well as this, one that, like my grandfather's big round

table with the locomotive, can take our country and put it on a

different track in Iraq that will assure us of that and that will cause

us to change our mission for our troops from combat to supporting,

equipping, and training, province by province, as soon as we honorably

can.

If it does, as I said earlier, I believe we will see about half our

troops come home within a year or two. The principles also include a

long-term but steadily diminishing presence in Iraq to fight

counterterrorism and a stepped-up effort for diplomatic and political

efforts especially in the region. But if the President were to do this,

and if the Democratic leadership would make room for consensus in this

body, we could end this spectacle of the U.S. Congress lecturing

Baghdad for being in a political stalemate when we are in one

ourselves. We can speak with a single voice. We are elected to be able

to do so. Our troops deserve it. The enemy needs to hear it.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.