Mr. President, I ask the Chair to notify me when I have

1 minute left on my time, and I thank the Chair; and I, of course, join

the Republican leader in paying tribute to all the members of our Armed

Forces, those who continue to serve, those who have completed their

service, and particularly those whom we have lost and their families.

But the Senate still needs to address Iraq. The American people voted

a year ago to end the war and we haven't followed through. We need to

address this issue and to end this misguided war now, before more

Americans are injured and killed.

The bridge fund passed yesterday by the House isn't good enough. The

goal for redeployment doesn't cut it. We need a binding deadline, which

means we need to pass the Feingold-Reid bill.

Despite recent reports of a downturn in violence in Iraq, violence

remains at unacceptable levels. 2007 has already been declared the

bloodiest year since the war in Iraq started, and that is with almost 2

months still to go. Those counts don't bring in the number of Iraqis

killed. On a relatively quiet day earlier this week, with no reported

coalition tragedies, at least 33 Iraqis were killed and an equal number

wounded in violence around the country. We can't say violence is down

when violence around the country remains so high, when so many

Americans are being killed and when so many Iraqis are afraid to walk

the streets.

The underlying reality is we are working with both sides of the Iraqi

civil war and deepening our dependence on former insurgents and

militia-infiltrated security forces.

Meanwhile, the situation in the North and South is precarious at

best. Unrest in these areas threatens the security of our supply lines.

The most recent National Intelligence Estimate largely attributed the

decline in violence--particularly in Baghdad--to population

displacements. Baghdad is now predominantly Shi'ite. While the purpose

of the surge was to foster reconciliation, the reality is that the

number of Iraqis displaced by the conflict doubled since the start of

the surge, adding to millions already pushed out of their homes from

2003 to 2006.

Meanwhile, we have put our troops outside the forward operating bases

in more dangerous territory for the purpose of policing the Iraqi civil

war. When they are out in those joint security stations, they have to

spend half

their time watching their backs because our ``allies'' are former Sunni

insurgents and Iraqi Security Forces, neither of whom can be trusted.

We continue to supposedly ``train'' Iraqi Security Forces despite the

fact that we finished training over 300,000 of them over a year ago. Of

course, we may well be simply contributing to the Iraqi civil war by

``training'' and arming forces that are infiltrated by militias. We

can't even account for the guns we have given them.

The ``al Anbar'' strategy--signing cease fires I with insurgents who

were attacking our guys not too long ago--does not have the support of

the Iraqi government. It is a poor substitute for meaningful

reconciliation, which supposedly the surge is going to foster. Now the

administration is shifting the goal posts and talking about ``bottom-

up'' reconciliation.

We have seen the levels of violence in Iraq shift before--this is

nothing new. If my colleagues think the surge is working and violence

is down--let's get out while the getting is good. Without meaningful

reconciliation, the violence will spike up again, that's for sure. So

let's not wait around for that to happen.

Many U.S. troops currently in Iraq are now in their second or third

tours of duty. Approximately 95 percent of the Army National Guard's

combat battalions and special operations units have been mobilized

since 9/11.

Mr. President, 1.4 million Americans have served in Iraq, and over

400,000 have served multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nearly

4,000 have been killed in Iraq and over 27,000 have been wounded.

The Army cannot maintain its current pace of operations in Iraq

without seriously damaging the military. Young officers are leaving the

service at an alarming rate.

Readiness levels for the Army are at lows not seen since Vietnam.

Every active Army brigade currently not deployed is unprepared to

perform its wartime mission.

More than two-thirds of active duty Army brigades are unready for

missions because of manpower and equipment shortages--most of which can

be attributed to Iraq.

There are insufficient Reserves to respond to additional conflicts or

crises around the world, of which there are, of course, potentially

many.

This failure to prioritize correctly has left vital missions

unattended. Natural disaster response, U.S. border security, and

international efforts to combat al Qaida are all suffering due to the

strain on military forces caused by poor strategy and failed leadership

in Iraq.

Thousands of our troops have returned home with invisible wounds;

such as PTSD and TBI--traumatic brain injury, which will have a long-

term impact on veterans and their families. These invisible wounds are

not counted in the casualty numbers, but we will be struggling with

them for a generation or more.

The cost of the War? America has been in Iraq longer than it was in

World War II.

Secretary Rumsfeld said the war would cost less than $50 billion. The

administration has now requested over $600 billion for the war.

If we don't change course in Iraq, the cost of the war is likely to

balloon to $3.5 trillion.

If we keep a ``Korea-like presence'' in Iraq, as Secretary Gates has

predicted, this means we will have 55,000 troops in Iraq by 2013--a

level that remains constant until 2017. And while this drop would

certainly be cheaper, it would still mean an additional $690 billion.

CBO has estimated that, just paying the interest on the money we have

borrowed to pay for the war to date, will cost another $415 billion.

We are currently spending nearly $9 billion a month in Iraq. In 3

months in Iraq, we spend nearly the same amount that we spend on

foreign relations and aid worldwide in 1 year.

The fiscal year total spending of the war--$150 billion--is greater

than the combination of spending on our national transportation

infrastructure, health research, customs and border protection, higher

education assistance, environmental protection, Head Start, and the

CHIP program. Our national programs are being neglected because of this

disastrous war and future generations will bear the brunt of our

misguided policy.

The costs are only rising. We spent twice as much this year in Iraq

as we did in 2004.

The President continues to mislead the country about al-Qaida and

Iraq. Contrary to the President's assertions, Pakistan and Afghanistan,

not Iraq, are the key theater in this global conflict. While the

administration has focused on Iraq, al-Qaida has reconstituted itself

along the Afghanistan- Pakistan border.

The President also presents a false choice between fighting al-Qaida

in Iraq and doing nothing. Every single redeployment proposal includes

the option of targeted operations against al-Qaida within Iraq. The

difference is that the President seems to think that 160,000 or 180,000

troops, sent to Iraq for an entirely different purpose, need to stay.

We cannot ignore the rest of the world to focus solely on Iraq. Al-

Qaida is and will continue to be a global terrorist organization with

dangerous affiliates around the world. Contrary to what the

administration has implied, al-Qaida is not abandoning its efforts to

fight us globally so that it can fight us in Iraq. That is absurd.

We need a robust military presence and effective reconstruction

program in Afghanistan. We need to build strong partnerships where AQ

and its affiliates are operating--across North Africa, in Southeast

Asia, and along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. And we

need to address the root causes of the terrorist threat, not just rely

on military power to get the job done.

For example, right now, Iran's strategic position continues to

improve and the situation on the Turkish border is explosive. We are

bogged down in Iraq and exposed to attack from all sides, and our

ability to promote regional stability from a position of strength is

undermined.

Maintaining a huge, open-ended presence is igniting tensions in the

region, and playing into the hands of the Iranian regime. Iran is able

to expand their influence while we take the hits, in terms of

casualties and finances. Our open-ended presence in Iraq is a blessing

for Iran because it provides them with a buffer and mitigates any

potential conflict between those two countries. It also removes any

incentive for Iran to engage in a constructive manner.

Maintaining a significant U.S. troop presence in Iraq is undermining

our ability to deter Iran as it increases its influence in Iraq,

becomes bolder in its nuclear aspirations, and continues to support

Hezbollah.

The American people want us out of Iraq. The administration's policy

is clearly untenable. The American people know that, which is why they

voted the way they did in November. More than 60 percent of Americans

are in favor of a phased withdrawal. They do not want to pass this

problem off to another President, and another Congress. And they sure

don't want another American service member to die, or lose a limb, while

elected representatives put their own political comfort over the wishes

of their constituents.

The Feingold-Reid amendment requires the President to safely redeploy

U.S. troops from Iraq by June 30, 2008. At that point, funding for

military operations in Iraq is terminated, with narrow exceptions for

targeted operations against al-Qaida and its affiliates; providing

security for U.S. Government personnel and infrastructure; and training

Iraqis.

We have narrowed the training exception to prevent training of Iraqi

Security Forces--ISF--who took part in sectarian violence or attacks

against U.S. troops. The exception also prohibits U.S. troops training

Iraqis from being embedded with or taking part in combat operations

with the ISF. These changes are intended to address concerns about the

performance of the ISF--which has been infiltrated by Shia militias and

accused of attacks upon U.S. troops--and to make sure that ``training''

is not used as a loophole to allow substantial numbers of U.S. troops

to remain in Iraq for combat purposes.

The other two exceptions are appropriately narrow: the

counterterrorism exception applies to operations against al-Qaida and

affiliated international terrorist organizations, while force

protection applies to protecting U.S.

Government personnel and infrastructure.

The time has come for the Senate to seriously engage on this issue.

The costs and the tragedy of this war are plainly unacceptable and

contrary to the will of the American people.

I am, of course, disappointed Republicans have again

blocked us from debating and voting on legislation to end the war in

Iraq. S. 1077 is the bill I introduced with the majority leader, Harry

Reid, and eight other Senators earlier this year to safely redeploy

troops from Iraq. The substitute amendment is the amendment we offered

to the Defense authorization bill in September. It is, in effect, just

a tweaked version of S. 1077. The majority leader joins me in these

efforts.

There is simply no good reason to block a vote on this important

bill. I assure my colleagues I am not going to go away, and this issue

will not go away either, much as they might prefer it. Until Congress

brings a halt to the President's open-ended, misguided war in Iraq, we

will have debates and votes on this issue again and again and again.

I yield the floor.