Mr. President, here we go again. We have had an effort to

take another vote on whether we should pull out of Iraq. Apparently, it

is based on public opinion polls. Some think it would be popular, and

certainly the moveon.org and Code Pink wing of the majority party would

be very happy if we could have crammed down a measure to make a

substantial change in our policy without even allowing an amendment. It

is absolutely unacceptable on its face.

I object not only on behalf of myself and many of my colleagues but

for the brave men and women from America who volunteered to go into

harm's way for our security and to promote security in the world.

Retreat and defeat may be politically popular with some, but this kind

of poison pill does great injustice to what our American volunteers

have done. From the people on the ground, when we first started

considering these retreat-and-defeat measures, I heard a very heartfelt

plea: We have made too many contributions and made too many sacrifices

to see it all go for naught because of political maneuvering on Capitol

Hill. That comes from people who have seen their comrades fall in

battle.

This year alone, the Democrats have attempted at least nine times to

force the President to change the military strategy and tactics in

Iraq, on the misbegotten notion that somehow we, in this comfortable

setting of Congress, can make better military, tactical, and strategic

decisions than our commanders on the ground. I find that deplorable.

It used to be the tradition of this body, of America, that we

supported our troops when they were going in harm's way. Now some are

doing everything possible to undermine their efforts. Nine times they

have tried to change the policy. After 77 of us voted to send troops

into Iraq because we knew it was a dangerous place, we found out--by

the Iraq Survey Group--that it was even more dangerous.

Make no mistake, while some in this body may not think Iraq is

important, two people whose activities I try to follow fairly closely

in intelligence, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, his No. 2 man,

think Iraq should be the headquarters of their caliphate, the

headquarters of their vicious terrorist empire that wants to subjugate

the region and threaten the United States.

Now, however, there is a key difference from earlier because we are

seeing dramatic improvements in the security situation in Iraq, in

particular in Al Anbar Province, which a year ago was a deadly place, a

deadly place into which American troops could only go under heavy fire.

My son and several thousand marines are coming home because they have

succeeded. Yes, there is a strategy for drawing down our troops. The

President has announced it. It is called ``return on success.'' We

bring the troops back when they have succeeded in their mission.

In Iraq, in Al Anbar, I have heard from people who are imbedded with

Iraqi security forces that times have changed. There now are Iraqi

citizen groups, citizen watch groups, who look for IEDs, who will

identify foreign terrorists--al-Qaida types--who come into the area,

and who will point out factories designed to build explosive vehicles.

They turn that over to the Iraqi police in the area, and they clean it

up. I have heard from a guy on the ground who is responsible for

maintaining stability and security from the terrorists that the marines

were no longer needed. So they are coming back. This is being

replicated in places throughout Iraq.

Have we finished? We have not finished the job. There are still other

areas, but it means we are succeeding. Iraqis are going about their

normal business. Unfortunately for our fighting men and women and the

Iraqi people who put their trust in us to see this mission through, too

rarely are their successes being reported. They are ignored, although

the New York Times, on the back page, I think, this past weekend,

pointed out that we had routed al-Qaida in Iraq. Surprise. That wasn't

on the front page, did not make headlines, because it has indicated a

major change. Have you heard much about the success of General Petraeus

and the counterinsurgency strategy after he testified on Capitol Hill?

If you are like most Americans, the answer is you have heard very

little, because it has fundamentally changed. While the media has

always been quick to report bombings and failures in Iraq, it is simply

not providing all of the good news.

They have been remarkably successful in 2007 in reducing violence.

Yes, with the surge, with the new strategy, there was violence. But,

according to General Odierno, the operational commander of U.S. forces

in Iraq, enemy attacks are now at their lowest level since January 2006

and continue to drop. There has been a 60-percent decrease in IED

attacks.

The reduction in violence is partly as a result of the presence of

additional American forces and their adoption of the sound

counterinsurgency strategy--go in and clear an area, work with the

Iraqi security forces, and help them build an economy, a neighborhood,

a safe place. It is also because the leaders on the ground in Iraq, the

Sunni sheiks, have said--they have seen what continued terrorist

attacks do to their country, to their people. The most frequent victims

are Iraqis, good Muslim Iraqis who are being killed by the terrorists.

They want to cooperate with us, and they are building, from the ground

up, a stable, reliable, peaceful control over the area with the Iraqi

security forces. Yes, some of them fought against us in the past, but

they are now on our side because we are on their side and we are

helping them. And when they take over, we will move back.

Now, I am fully aware of and concerned about the lack of political

reconciliation. But, again, from boots on the ground, I hear: How do

you expect them to establish a perfect democracy when this country is

still not secure? Our goal in Iraq must be to work with the Iraqis, the

Iraqi security forces, and responsible leaders to establish relative

peace and security in the area.

What would happen if we withdrew precipitously for a political goal?

We learned in an open hearing of the Intelligence Committee in January

that if we pull out before we have stabilized this area and left in

place Iraqi security forces, there would be chaos, and three bad things

would happen: No. 1, there would be greatly increased violence among

Sunni and Shia; there would likely be intervention by other states

coming into Iraq to protect their coreligionists, potentially a civil

war spreading into a region-wide war in a vital security and energy

part of the world; but most dangerous for United States, and this is

something my colleagues who want to cut and run seem to refuse to

acknowledge, is that al-Qaida would be able to establish a safe haven.

Yes, they have been driven off to the hills, the mountainous regions

somewhere in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but they cannot mobilize and

exercise their command and control. If they had a place for command and

control, had access to the oil riches of Iraq to fund their deeds, we

would be significantly at greater risk to weapons of mass destruction

attacks by terrorist groups funded and supported by al-Qaida.

We need to be realistic in defining what reconciliation is. It is a

long process. To this day, for example, not all outstanding political

tensions have been reconciled in Northern Ireland, in Bosnia, or

Kosovo. Yet the civil wars and the terrorist campaigns that once

threatened to engulf those areas have ended, and competing factions are

pursuing their agendas primarily by peaceful political means.

Our men and women in uniform are fighting in Iraq to bring violence

under control, to destroy al-Qaida, to drive out destabilizing Iranian

meddling, and to establish a relatively stable and secure structure in

Iraq, and they are making progress to those goals.

Getting a perfect democracy--we thought we had a perfect Jeffersonian

democracy; then we had to have a Lincolnian republic after the Civil

War. We are continuing to see the democracy. While it is the best of

all the other bad situations, it is not perfect and does not work in a

clear upward path; it takes time. And now we are seeing the questions

being worked out at the local level on revenue sharing, oil revenue

sharing. But to push a retreat-and-defeat, a delay-and-deny battle for

the funds for our troops on the ground is unthinkable. This unanimous

consent agreement to which I objected would be the ultimate cut and

run: declare defeat, and hope to be rewarded in 2008 at the polls--a

very regrettable effort by our colleagues on the other side.

The 2008 Defense appropriations bill recently passed by Congress

includes no funding for our current operations in Iraq, Afghanistan,

and the global war on terror. For 3 years prior to this, we included

emergency funding for the regular Defense appropriations bill to cover

the cost of military operations until a full supplemental could be

adopted. We are now seeing, coming over from the House, a pittance of

what is needed, encapsulated in all kinds of restrictions that tie the

hands of the troops on the ground and put unreasonable restrictions on

them that are likely to cause much greater danger to American

personnel, military and civilian, over there. What we need to provide--

and I hope we will be able to put an alternative emergency funding bill

on the floor--are funds for force protection initiatives, body armor,

helmets, ballistic eye protection, even knee and elbow pads, flares,

and armor. The 2008 Defense spending bill did include funding for

MRAPs, but why did the Democrats insist on omitting other critical

items?

Now that DOD will be forced to continue robbing Peter to pay Paul in

order to fund operations, it has a tremendously negative impact, not

only on the way we conduct the war but how the Department of Defense

operates. Important equipment reset and other procurement programs have

to be slowed down. It will impact the availability of equipment,

including critical equipment for the National Guard needed to respond

to domestic emergencies. Without this funding, the Pentagon is forced

to divert money from their regular accounts to fund overseas

operations, about $13 billion a month.

I have a letter that has just been sent by Gordon England. He has

pointed out what this would mean to the Defense Department. It means,

among other things, the Deputy Secretary of Defense said, they will

have no choice but to deplete appropriations accounts, and it will

result in a profoundly negative impact on the defense civilian working

force, depot maintenance, base operations, and training activities, and

within a few weeks they will be required by law to issue notices of

termination to civilian employees.

In addition, a lack of any funding for the Iraqi security forces and

the Afghanistan national security forces directly undermines the

ability of the United States to continue training and equipping Iraqi

and Afghanistan troops who are needed to take over. This makes

absolutely no sense in a time of war. We deny the needed funding that

will keep our troops--not only keep the troops in the field but support

those who are working to assure that we can turn over the

responsibility to them.

This is absolutely the wrong message to send to our deployed troops.

We must provide emergency funding without political timetables to win

votes at home but undermine our troops.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Record a letter from

Deputy Secretary of Defense England to House Defense Subcommittee

chairman John Murtha and an article in today's Washington Times called

``War Funds Under Attack.''

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

the Record, as follows: