Are we in morning business?

I ask unanimous consent

to proceed up to 22 minutes.

Mr. President, I rise to

speak in a matter that is very hard to

discuss these days, when we are dealing

with the aftermath of the destruction

that has been visited upon our country.

I rise to speak of a matter that is at

the very heart of our fight against terrorism.

Today I met with the Secretary of

State, along with my Senate Foreign

Relations Committee colleagues, including

the occupant of the Chair, for

about 2 hours. I applaud the actions of

President Bush and Secretary Powell

and the rest of the administration

throughout this terrible crisis. I applaud

what he had to say at our meeting.

Of all the topics Secretary Powell

discussed with me and other members

of the Foreign Relations Committee,

none was more important in my view

than this: We must make a bold, brave,

and powerful decision to provide generous

relief and reconstruction aid to

the people of Afghanistan and neighboring

countries, even as we move toward

war. We must wage a war against

the vicious thugs who attacked our nation,

but we must not permit this war

to be mischaracterized as a battle

against the people of Afghanistan or

the wider Muslim world.

If we can’t make this critical distinction,

all our efforts are doomed to failure.

The people of Afghanistan, who

are looking for a way of ridding themselves

of the Taliban regime, might direct

their anger at us rather than at

the brutal warlords who have caused

them so much misery and pain. The

people of Muslim countries from Morocco

to Indonesia could turn against

the United States, with disastrous consequences

for many years to come—

notwithstanding my belief that we will

prosecute this military effort with discreet

and precise efforts to minimize

civilian casualties.

We have already seen how those who

wish us ill can portray legitimate, restrained

military action as an indiscriminate

attack on innocent civilians,

and how such an argument can be persuasive

to so many people in the Middle

East. Saddam Hussein, a man who

has killed far more Muslims than any

American attack before, during, or

since the gulf war, has depicted the

United States-led actions against Iraq

as an assault on Iraqi women and children,

an assault on Islam. That is a guy

who has killed more believers of Islam

than just about anybody else—and yet

he is able to put out a boldfaced lie, the

lie that our soldiers have gone out of

their way to hurt innocent civilians. In

fact, our soldiers have always gone out

of their way to avoid collateral damage

to civilians, even during the height of

the gulf war.

The United Nations’ sanctions imposed

since that time place no restrictions

on the delivery of food or medicine

to the people of Iraq. Quite the opposite.

Yet Saddam has won the international

battle. He has convinced a significant

portion of the Islamic world

that we are the reason the people of

Iraq do not have food and medicine in

sufficient supply. It is Saddam who is

starving his own people, deliberately

sitting on billions of oil dollars earmarked

for humanitarian aid to the

people of Iraq while he pursues his

weapons of mass destruction and builds

himself more palaces.

The reason I bring this up is that

throughout much of the Muslim world

Saddam’s propaganda remains convincing.

People see these images of

children and their mothers scrambling

for food, the footage of destroyed buildings,

and they know the United States

conducts bombing raids to enforce the

no-fly zone and we are leading an international

coalition to maintain sanctions.

So they conclude, with his distinct

urging, that we are not acting in

accordance with U.N. resolutions and

the consent of the world community,

but that we are acting in the way Saddam

Hussein portrays us as acting: victimizing

his people, oppressing women

and children, and causing great hardship.

No matter how we cut it, he has won

the battle over who’s at fault. If you

had told me that was going to be the

case after the gulf war, I would have

told you that you were crazy. One of

the reasons he has won is we are so accustomed

in America to not beating

our own chests about what we do for

other people, we are so accustomed to

thinking that people are going to be

open minded, as we are. It is almost beyond

our capacity to believe anyone

could think we were responsible for

those women and children and old people

in Iraq starving, being malnourished,

and not having adequate medical

care.

It is very simple in the Muslim world

right now. When America bombs,

America is blamed for anything else

that happens. And not just blamed for

what we have done, but we are blamed

for what we have not done. It is not

fair, but it is the fact. As the world’s

only superpower, we receive a lot of

misdirected blame under the best of

circumstances. The nuances and subtleties

of geopolitics don’t get translated

to the language of the street. And

once the bombs start to fall, any vestige

of nuance is blown away with

whatever they hit.

We cannot allow what happened in

Iraq to happen in Afghanistan. Osama

bin Laden and the Taliban leader,

Mullah Omar, have been trying to cast

the current conflict in terms of religion

and have been calling our efforts a

crusade against Islam.

You mention the word ‘‘crusade’’ in

the Middle East and it has a very different

context than when we use it

here. It is not accidental that the word

is used by bin Laden. It conjures up

several hundred years of painful history.

This is not a crusade. It is not a war

against Muslims. And we cannot permit

bin Laden and the Taliban to portray

it as such. So how do we prevent

it from happening this time?

We have all said the right words.

President Bush, Secretary Powell, and

most Senators gathered in this Chamber

have all spoken out forcefully. Our

rhetoric has been fine, but if we want

to convince the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims

of our sincerity, it will take much

more than our rhetoric. It will take action,

real action, to save the lives of

real people.

After my long-time involvement with

and strong advocacy for Muslims in

Europe, whenever I go to the Balkans I

can barely take a step without being

reminded of this dynamic. If my name

is mentioned among Muslim leaders, I

am thanked for being one of their saviors;

I am thanked for being one of the

people who has fought to help them—

and I’m sure all those American servicemen

and servicewomen over there

now protecting the Muslims in the Balkans

feel the same. But none of that

message has gotten to the Middle East.

It is ironic.

So what we need to do is back up our

words with our wallets. In my view, we

must do this ahead of time.

We say we have no beef with the Afghan

people, and we do not. But one

out of four Afghans—perhaps 7 million

people—are surviving on little more

than grass and locusts. We say our

fight is only against the terrorists,

along with their sponsors, and it is.

But the people of Afghanistan have

been subjected to constant warfare for

the past two decades. They are looking

for help, and they are looking at us.

We did not cause the terrible drought

that brought so many Afghans to the

brink of starvation, and we did not

cause the Soviet invasion or the civil

war that followed. We were interested

in Afghanistan, but only when it suited

our own interests. We paid attention

during the 1980s, but then came down

with a case of attention deficit disorder.

As soon as the last Russian

troops pulled out in 1989, our commitment

seemed to retreat along with

them. And I was here, so I share this

responsibility.

The years of bloody chaos that followed

were what gave rise to the

Taliban. If we had not lost interest a

decade ago, perhaps Afghanistan would

not have turned into the swamp of terrorism

and brutality that it has become.

I say this not to cast stones, because

I was here. We do not need to ask who

‘‘lost’’ Afghanistan. There is more than

enough blame to go around. It is not a

matter of political party or ideological

outlook. Nobody—Republican, Democrat,

liberal, conservative—stepped up

to the plate when it counted because

we did not take it as seriously as it

turned out to be.

It is time we all stepped up to the

plate.

In fairness to the folks who were

here, like me and others, the truth of

the matter is we get called on from all

over the world and we find ourselves

responding to whatever the crisis of

the moment is.

It is time to reverse more than a decade

of neglect, not only for the sake of

Afghanistan, but for our sake. Not only

for the sake of Pakistan, which faces

growing instability exacerbated by the

enormous burden of sheltering millions

of Afghan refugees. Not only for the

sake of the Central Asian republics, all

of which are threatened by chaos fomented

in Kabul and Kandahar. We

have to take action not merely for

their sake, but for our own sake.

The tragedy of September 11 served

as a stark reminder that isolation is

impossible. What happens in South and

Central Asia has direct impact on what

happens right here in the United

States. If we ever were able to think of

our nation as one buffered from faraway

events, we can no longer maintain

that illusion. So what can we do?

Let me make this very bold proposal

as to what I think we should and could

do. The plight of the Afghans had

reached a crisis point before September

11, and the prospect of military action

has made matters even worse. The U.N.

places the number of Afghan refugees

at about 3 million, and in Iran at about

one half that, with another million displaced

within Afghanistan itself. These

people are living—if one can call it

that—in conditions of unspeakable deprivation.

One camp in the Afghan city

of Herat is locally called, quite appropriately,

‘‘the slaughterhouse.’’ The expectation

of U.S. attacks has already

prompted more desperate people to flee

their homes, and a estimated 1.5 million

may soon take to the road.

U.N. Secretary Kofi Annan has issued

an appeal for $584 million to meet the

needs of the Afghan refugees and displaced

people, within Afghanistan and

in neighboring countries. This is the

amount deemed necessary to stave off

disaster for the winter, which will start

in Afghanistan in just a few weeks.

We must back up our rhetoric with

action, with something big and bold

and meaningful. We can offer to foot

the entire bill for keeping the Afghan

people safely fed, clothed, and sheltered

this winter, and that should be

the beginning.

We can establish an international

fund for the relief, reconstruction, and

recovery of Central and Southwest

Asia. We can do this through the U.N.

or through a multilateral bank, but we

must be in it for the long haul with the

rest of the world.

The initial purpose of the fund would

be to address the immediate needs of

the Afghans displaced by drought and

war for the next 6 months. But the

fund’s longer-term purpose would be to

help stabilize the whole region by, as

the President says, draining the swamp

that Afghanistan has become.

We can kick the effort off in a way

that would silence our critics in the

rest of the world: a check for $1 billion,

and a promise for more to come as long

as the rest of the world joins us. This

initial amount would be more than

enough to meet all the refugees’ shortterm

needs, and would be a credible

downpayment for the long-term effort.

Eventually the world community will

have to pony up more billions, but

there is no avoiding that now, not if we

expect our words ever to carry any

weight.

If anyone thinks this amount of

money is too high, let me note one

stark, simple and very sad statistic.

The damage inflicted by the September

11 attack in economic terms alone was

a minimum of several hundred billion

dollars and a maximum of over $1 trillion.

The cost in human life, of course,

as the Presiding Officer knows, is far

beyond any calculation.

The fund I propose would be a way to

put some flesh on the bones, not only

of the Afghan refugees, but on the

international coalition that President

Bush has assembled. All nations would

be invited to contribute to this fund,

and projects for relief and reconstruction

could be carried out under the auspices

of the United Nations. Countries

that are leery of providing military aid

against the Taliban could use this recovery

fund as a means to demonstrate

their commitment to the wider cause.

Money from the fund would be used

for projects in several countries. In the

short term, it could help front-line

countries handle the social problems

caused by existing refugee burdens or

the expected military campaign. This

would further solidify the alliance and

give wavering regimes, especially Pakistan,

a valuable ‘‘deliverable’’ to

present to its own people.

The fund would also be used for relief

efforts within Afghanistan itself. This

could take several forms. It could help

finance air drops of food and medical

supplies. It could support on-theground

distribution in territories held

by the Northern Alliance and other

friendly forces. And perhaps, most significantly,

it could provide the

Pashtun leaders of the south with a

powerful incentive to abandon the

Taliban and join the United States-led

effort.

Think of the impact. Many Pashtun

chiefs, including current supporters of

the Taliban, are already on the fence.

If the Pashtuns, who are now going

hungry, saw relief aid pouring into

neighboring provinces or in from the

air, with their own leaders stubbornly

stuck by Mullah Omar and refused such

aid well, we could suddenly find ourselves

with a lot of new allies. The

seemingly intractable problem of forging

a political consensus in Afghanistan

might become a whole lot easier

to solve.

A massive humanitarian relief effort

will not guarantee a favorable political

solution. But it clearly is within the

realm of possibility. We can establish

our credibility by committing ourselves

to providing this aid now, before

the first bomb falls.

The funding that I propose will address

not only the short-term goal, but

the more important (and more difficult)

longer term ones as well. Whatever

we do in Afghanistan—whether it

involves the commitment of military,

political, or humanitarian assets—

must be geared toward a long-term solution.

We cannot repeat the mistakes

of the past. If we think only in the

short term, only of getting Bin Laden

and the Taliban—which we must do,

but that is not all we must do—we are

just begging for greater trouble down

the line.

We have a unique opportunity here

and right now—a window of opportunity

that will not be open forever.

Now, while the attention of the country

and the world is focused on this

vital issue, we can create a consensus

necessary to build a lasting peace in

the region.

This will be a multinational,

multiyear, multibillion-dollar commitment.

And if we take a leading role, I

am confident that other nations will

follow.

Today is not the time to speak about

political reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The situation is extremely fluid,

and delicate negotiations are in

progress. This Chamber is not the appropriate

place for such a sensitive discussion.

Today is also not the time to discuss

all the details of the long-term economic

reconstruction package for the

region. Once the immediate refugee

crisis is dealt with, there will be plenty

of opportunity to deal with the nittygritty

of how best to help the people in

the region rebuild their lives. I will not

presume to lay out a long-term agenda

today. But some of the foremost items

on such an agenda might include the

following:

Creation of secular schools, both in

Pakistan and Afghanistan, to break

the stranglehold of radical religious

seminaries that have polluted a whole

generation of Afghan boys. The Taliban

movement is an outgrowth of this network

of extremist seminaries, a network

which has been funded by militant

forces around the world and has

fed off the lack of secular educational

opportunities.

We can also be involved in the restoration

of women’s rights. The

Taliban created a regime more hostile

to the rights of women than any state

in the whole world. Women under

Taliban rule have been deprived of even

the most basic of human rights. A critical

element of the new school system,

I should emphasize, will be providing

equal education for girls and boys

alike. If Afghan girls and women do not

have a chance to go to school, they will

never be able to have the rights they

are so cruelly denied now by the

Taliban.

De-mining operations: Afghanistan is

the world’s most heavily mined country.

Clearing these mines will take

time, money, and expertise. Until these

fields are cleared, farmers—whether

currently trapped in refugee camps or

trapped by drought—cannot start farming

their land.

Creation of full-scale hospitals and

village medical clinics in Afghanistan

and throughout the region. As in the

case of schools, the absence of such

services has created a void filled by

radical groups.

People sometimes ask why extremist

organizations have been so successful

in recruiting support in the Muslim

world. Let me tell you, they don’t do it

all by hate. Many militant groups provide

valuable social services in order to

gain goodwill, and then twist that

goodwill to vicious ends.

Another thing we can provide is a

crop substitution program for narcotics.

This week, the Taliban reversed

its short-lived ban on growing opium.

As part of a long-term solution, we

have to help the Afghan farmers find a

new way to support their families. We

cannot let Afghanistan resume its

place as the world’s No. 1 source of heroin.

Building basic infrastructure: Just as

Saddam manipulated images of war in

Iraq, the Taliban could have success

doing the same. We have to counter

this effort by drilling wells, building

roads, providing technical expertise,

and a whole range of development

projects.

We are portrayed as bringing destruction

to the region. We must fight that

perception: we must prove to the world

that we are not a nation of destruction,

but of reconstruction.

This afternoon, the members of the

Foreign Relations Committee and I had

a very productive meeting with the

Secretary of State. Everything I have

said here today is an attempt to support

Secretary Powell and President

Bush in their efforts to send the world

a simple message: Our fight is against

terrorism—not against Islam. We oppose

the Taliban not the Afghan people.

We stand ready as a great nation, as

a generous nation, as a nation that has

led the world in the past, a nation

whose word is its bond, and we stand

ready to match our words with our actions.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor. I

suggest the absence of a quorum.