Mr. President, I rise

to comment on the administration’s

‘‘discussion draft’’ of a resolution authorizing

the use of force against Iraq.

This proposal is unacceptable. The

administration has been talking about

war in Iraq for quite some time now.

Surely they had the time to draft a

more careful, thoughtful proposal than

the irresponsibly broad and sweeping

language that they sent to Congress.

Apparently the administration put

forward such broad language as a negotiating

tactic—asking for everything in

the hopes of getting merely a lot.

But we are not haggling over a used

car. We are making decisions that

could send young Americans to war

and decisions that could have farreaching

consequences for the global

campaign against terrorism and for

America’s role in the world in the

twenty-first century.

To put forth such irresponsible language

is to suggest that the President

actually wants the authority to do

anything he pleases in the Middle

East—and that suggestion is likely to

raise tensions in an already explosive

region. To pepper the resolution with

so many completely different justifications

for taking action signals a lack of

seriousness of purpose, and it obscures

the nature of the mission on the table.

And then to insist on immediate action

while remaining largely incapable of

pointing to any imminent threat and

unwilling to flesh out the operation actually

being proposed reveals a troubling

approach to our national security.

The administration has a responsibility

to define what the threat is. Is it

a link between the Iraqi Government

and al-Qaida, or is it Iraq’s pursuit of

weapons of mass destruction?

So far I certainly would conclude

that there is insufficient evidence to

support the first charge about al-Qaida,

but the administration keeps using it

whenever they feel like without information.

Why? Are they trying to gloss

over the real possibility that this focus

on Iraq, if not managed with diplomatic

skill, will, indeed, do harm to

the global campaign against terrorism?

The threat we know is real—Iraq’s

pursuit of weapons of mass destruction

or WMD—is unquestionably a very serious

issue. What is the mission? Is the

mission on the table disarmament or is

it regime change? Has anyone heard a

credible plan for securing the weapons

of mass destruction sites as part of a

military operation in Iraq? Has anyone

heard any credible plan for what steps

the United States intends to take to

ensure that weapons of mass destruction

do not remain a problem in Iraq

beyond the facile ‘‘get rid of Saddam

Hussein’’ rallying cry?

Saddam Hussein is a vile man with a

reckless and brutal history, and I have

no problem agreeing that the United

States should support regime change. I

agree with those who assert that Americans,

Iraqis, and the people of the Middle

East would be much better off if he

were no longer in power. But he is not

the sole personification of a destabilizing

WMD program. Once Hussein’s

control is absent, we have either a

group of independent, self-interested

actors with access to WMD or an unknown

quantity of a new regime. We

may face a period of some chaos,

wherein a violent power struggle ensues

as actors maneuver to succeed

Saddam.

Has anyone heard the administration

articulate its plan for the day after? Is

the administration talking about a

long-term occupation? If we act unilaterally,

that could mean a vast number

of Americans on the ground in a region

where, sadly, we are often regarded as

an imperialistic enemy.

Given the disarray in Afghanistan

and the less than concerted American

response to it, why should anyone believe

that we will take Iraq more seriously?

Certainly, it is undesirable for

the United States to do this alone, to

occupy a Middle Eastern country, and

make our troops the target of anti-

American sentiment.

Of course, Mr. President, I am sure

you and I would agree, none of these

concerns is a rationale for inaction.

Let me repeat that. None of these concerns

is a rationale for inaction. This is

not about being a hawk or a dove. This

is not about believing that Saddam

Hussein is somehow misunderstood. He

is a monster. Iraq’s weapons programs

are real, and only a fool would believe

that the United States should simply

hope for the best and allow recent

trends to continue.

Equally, Mr. President, only a person

lacking in wisdom would send American

troops wading into this mire with

a half-baked plan premised on the notion

that the Iraqis will welcome us

with open arms; that somehow the

WMD threat will disappear with Saddam,

and that U.S. military action to

overthrow the Government of Iraq will

somehow bring the winds of democratic

change throughout the entire Middle

Eastern region.

We do not make decisions crucial to

our national security on a leap of faith.

Congress is the body constitutionally

responsible for authorizing the use of

our military forces in such a matter.

We cannot duck these tough issues by

simply assuring our constituents that

somehow the administration will

‘‘work it out.’’ That is not good

enough. We must not fail to demand a

policy that makes sense.

Let me be clear about another important

point: Maybe a policy that makes

sense involves the United Nations, but

maybe it does not. It is less important

whether our actions have a formal U.N.

seal of approval. What is important is

whether or not action has international

support. More important still

is whether or not action will promote

international hostility toward the

United States.

In the context of this debate on Iraq,

we are being asked to embrace a sweeping

new national doctrine. I am troubled

by the administration’s emphasis

on preemption and by its suggestion

that, in effect, deterrence and containment

are obsolete. What the administration

is talking about in Iraq really

sounds much more like prevention, and

I wonder if they are not using these

terms, ‘‘preemption’’ and ‘‘prevention’’

interchangeably. Preemption is knowing

that an enemy plans an attack and

not waiting to defend oneself.

Prevention is believing that another

may possibly someday attack, or may

desire to attack, and justifying the immediate

use of force on those grounds.

It is the difference between having information

to suggest that an attack is

imminent and believing that a given

government is antagonistic toward the

United States and continues to build

up its military capacity.

It is the difference between having

intelligence indicating that a country

is in negotiations with an unquestionably

hostile and violent enemy like al-

Qaida to provide them with weapons of

mass destruction and worrying, on the

other hand, that someday that country

might engage in such negotiations.

Of course, prevention does have an

important role in our national security

planning. It certainly should. We

should use a range of tools in a focused

way to tackle prevention—diplomatic,

sometimes multilateral, economic.

That is one of the core elements of any

foreign policy, and I stand ready to

work with my President and my colleagues

to bolster those preventive

measures and to work on the long-term

aspects of prevention, including meaningful

and sustained engagement in

places that have been far too neglected.

Unilaterally using our military

might to pursue a policy of prevention

around the world is not likely to be

seen as self-defense abroad, and I am

not at all certain that casting ourselves

in this role will make the United

States any safer. Would a world in

which the most powerful countries use

military force in this fashion be a safer

world? Would it be the kind of world in

which our national values could thrive?

Would it be one in which terrorism

would wither or would it be one in

which terrorist recruits will increase in

number every day?

Announcing that we intend to play

by our own rules, which look as if we

will make up as we go along, may not

be conducive to building a strong global

coalition against terrorism, and it

may not be conducive to combating the

anti-American propaganda that passes

for news in so much of the world.

Fundamentally, I think broadly applying

this new doctrine is at odds with

our historical national character. We

will defend ourselves fiercely if attacked,

but we are not looking for a

fight. To put it plainly: Our country

historically has not sought to use force

to make over the world as we see fit.

I am also concerned this approach

may be seen as a green light for other

countries to engage in their own preemptive

or preventive campaigns. Is

the United States really eager to see a

world in which such campaigns are

launched in South Asia or by China or

are we willing to say this strategy is

suitable for us but dangerous in the

hands of anybody else?

The United States does have to

rethink our approach to security

threats in the wake of September 11,

but it is highly questionable to suggest

that containment is dead, that deterrence

is dead, particularly in cases in

which the threat in question is associated

with a state and not nonstate actors,

and it is highly questionable to

embark on this sweeping strategy of

preventive military operations.

So as we seek to debate Iraq and

other issues critical to our national security,

I intend to ask questions, to demand

answers, and to keep our global

campaign against terrorism at the very

top of the priority list. This Senate is

responsible to all of the citizens of the

United States, to the core values of

this country, and to future generations

of Americans. We will not flinch from

defending ourselves and protecting our

national security, but we will not take

action that subordinates what this

country stands for. It is a tall order,

but I am confident that America will

rise to the occasion.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor,

and I suggest the absence of a quorum.