Mr. President, I

want to express my personal gratitude

to the Senate majority leader, to the

Senate Democratic leader, to my colleague

from Texas who has just spoken

for their eloquent statements, but really

more for the unmistakable message

that they send, which is that there are

ultimately times of conflict abroad

that involve the vital interests of the

United States, as the current situation

in Iraq does, no Democrats, no Republicans,

only Americans standing side

by side in support of the Commander in

Chief and all those Americans in uniform

who serve under him.

That, I hope, is the message that will

be heard in Baghdad, most importantly.

If the Commander in Chief of

the United States decides that military

force is necessary to be employed

against Iraq, the overwhelming majority

of Members of the U.S. Senate will

stand strongly behind him and behind

those American personnel in uniform

who will carry out that policy.

Mr. President, the statements of the

majority leader and the Democratic

leader are the finest examples of bipartisanship

and statesmanship. They remind

us, though there may be disagreements

in this Chamber on partisan

lines, that, again, when challenged,

when it comes to America’s vital interests

abroad, we will stand together

above party lines.

The administration has been very accessible,

very forthcoming in consulting

with both Houses of Congress about

the challenge that Saddam Hussein and

Iraq represent to us and to the security

of our allies in the region and our soldiers

in the region and of the world in

general. I think we have to express our

appreciation to the administration for

that dialog that continues.

What is at stake in Iraq today? For

one, something that might be considered

quaint in some quarters, meaningless

in other quarters, international

agreements are at stake, agreements to

end the gulf war, promises made by

Saddam Hussein about allowing inspections

which would enable us—the

world—to guarantee that he was keeping

his promises to disarm, a request

justifiably made by the victorious

forces in Operation Desert Storm and

required of those who were vanquished

in that conflict. So it is the integrity

of these agreements, in the first instance,

that is at stake.

Secondly, there are consequences,

which is the threat that Saddam Hussein

will use those weapons of mass destruction

that we know he has; that he

will use the ballistic missile, the delivery

system capacity to deliver those

weapons of mass destruction that we

know he has in rudiment and is developing

even further.

We know, as one of my colleagues

said a moment ago—I believe it was

Senator DASCHLE—unlike other leaders

in the world, including dictatorial

leaders of rogue nations who possess

weapons of mass destruction, this particular

leader, Saddam Hussein, has

used those weapons against his neighbor,

Iran, in the Iran-Iraq war in the

eighties, and against the Kurdish population

of his own country.

So our anger, our anxiety, our

unease, our judgment that we have

vital interests at stake is not theoretical.

It is based on a course of behavior

by this particular leader of this particular

nation. We went through the

entire cold war with enormous

amounts of nuclear power in our hands

and in the hands of the Soviet leaders,

but there was, in the end, a kind of understanding

based on a strange form of

civilized premise, which is that those

weapons would not ultimately be used,

and they were not ultimately used. I

don’t think we can reach that same

conclusion about this leader based on

his own course of behavior.

There is a way in which there is a

line to be drawn in this case, just as we

drew a line in the post-cold-war-world,

when Saddam invaded Kuwait and

threatened our neighbors and vital economic

interests and energy supplies in

that region and we acted, reacted and

reacted forcefully and rolled him back.

Just as in Bosnia, we saw ethnic conflict

could divide Europe and create

broader conflict there, and we acted

and stopped it. So, too, in this case, we

are called upon to show that we are

willing to draw a line, a preventive

line, against those who possess weapons

of mass destruction—chemical and

biological; some have called them the

poor nations’ nuclear weapons—that

we will draw a line and say we won’t

tolerate it. We are going to act to impose

a regime of promises to disarm

and if those promises are not kept, the

international community will act to

enforce them.

We have vital interests at stake in

the region. We have thousands of soldiers

there within range of these weapons

of Saddam Hussein. We have allies

in the region in the moderate Arab nations

and in Israel, and we have vital

economic interests in the oil supply in

that region.

Mr. President, the fact is that all of

those interests, all that we have at

stake there—international promises

made by Saddam as a condition to the

end of the cold war, the threat of weapons

of mass destruction and delivery

systems, the vital interests in the region,

the necessity to draw a line

against the use of chemical and biological

poisons, which all of the military

experts tell us will characterize

and intensify the security threats to

our region and most of the rest of the

world in the next century—all of those

threats are not just to the United

States, they are surely to our allies in

the region and are to most of the rest

of the world.

That is perhaps why so many nations

have come to our side as we face the reality

that the United Nations, not the

United States, tell us of the refusal of

Saddam Hussein to allow the inspections

that he promised and, therefore,

the fact that we have gone now more

than 5 months with those sites

uninspected and day by day the threat

rises.

That is why our closest and most

steadfast ally, Britain, have joined us,

are ready to stand and fly side by side

with us. But they are not alone. Canada,

Australia, the Netherlands, Bahrain,

Kuwait, Israel and a growing

number of others are prepared to join

us.

As much as we are heartened by this

support, we don’t see the same range of

the coalition that we had leading up to

the gulf war. Maybe that is understandable

because the threat that the

current crisis poses is not as immediate

and accomplished, it is mostly

imminent. In 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded

his neighbor Kuwait and threatened

Saudi Arabia and the rest of the

Persian Gulf states, oil-producing

states. In that circumstance, with a

danger that was real and experienced,

it was easier to assemble the broadbased

coalition that we did.

Today, the threat may not be as

clear to other nations of the world, but

its consequences are even more devastating

potentially than the real

threat, than the realized pain of the invasion

of Kuwait in 1990, because the

damage that can be inflicted by Saddam

Hussein and Iraq, under his leadership,

with weapons of mass destruction

is incalculable; it is enormous.

Therefore, I hope, though the circumstance

may not be as clear, that

other nations that have not yet forcefully

expressed their willingness to

stand with us and Britain and the other

allies I mentioned will come to an understanding

of that. It has been my

hope all along that if the United States

continued to lead, as we have, that the

full range of coalition allies would,

once again, stand by our side.

I always remember the Biblical evocation

which is, if the sound of the

trumpet is not clear, then who will follow

in battle? If the sound of the trumpet

is clear, then I hope that the widest

range of other nations in the world will

follow into battle, if that is necessary,

not simply to follow our leadership,

but because their vital interests are at

stake, in the resolution of this problem.

Mr. President, I think the administration

has made clear, and that is why

I believe there is broad support for the

possible attacks that may occur on

Iraq, that its goals here are limited. If

air attacks occur, these are not acts of

revenge, these are not punitive acts

which have no meaning. These would

be acts and attacks that are aimed at

accomplishing what the inspections

were supposed to accomplish, that are

aimed at accomplishing what the gulf

war cease-fire agreement was supposed

to accomplish, which is the diminution

and ultimately the elimination of

Iraq’s capacity to wage chemical, biological

or nuclear war against its

neighbors or ultimately anyone in the

world. That limited goal may not satisfy

some people, but it is a reasonable

goal at this time, and it is a goal that

I think ultimately and effectively will

enjoy the broadest support in the U.S.

Senate.

Mr. President, there are those who

say, ‘‘Well, what next? What if this

doesn’t work?’’ I am confident it will

work. When I say it will work, I mean

I have the confidence the United States

military has the capacity to strike at

Iraq in a way that will, in fact, incapacitate,

debilitate, postpone the ability

of that country under Saddam Hussein

to inflict damage on its neighbors

with weapons of mass destruction. So

that goal will be accomplished.

I think the question of what is next

is an appropriate topic of discussion.

Some people say we should pull back

and wait and see what, in that initial

time of that military strike, if it occurs,

it will gain us, to see whether diplomacy

can work again, to see if we

can build the fullness of the coalition

and again confront Saddam with the

opportunity to comply with the promises

he previously made.

Others, and I number myself among

this group, are very skeptical of that

policy. Diplomacy is always preferable

to the use of force, and yet, I myself remain

profoundly skeptical that an acceptable

diplomatic resolution to this

conflict is possible.

It is a painful and sad conclusion, but

it is based not on animus toward that

country, certainly not animus toward

the people of Iraq, but it is based on

the record. The record I need not cite

in detail, but we know about the violent

way in which Saddam Hussein

seized power in Iraq, eliminating those

of his fellow Iraqis who were in his

way, about the violent and dictatorial

way in which he has ruled. Life doesn’t

matter when you stand in the way of

him; of the means that he used to conduct

the war against Iran, including

weapons of mass destruction; of his invasion

of Kuwait; of his flaunting of

the very agreements he made to end

the gulf war; of the taunting of the

international community that he represents

today.

Mr. President, if this were a domestic

situation, a political situation, and we

were talking about criminal law in this

country, we have something in our law

called ‘‘three strikes and you are out,’’

three crimes and you get locked up for

good because we have given up on you.

I think Saddam Hussein has had more

than three strikes in the international,

diplomatic, strategic and military

community. So I have grave doubts

that a diplomatic solution is possible

here.

What I and some of the Members of

the Senate hope for is a longer-term

policy based on the probability that an

acceptable diplomatic solution is not

possible, which acknowledges as the

central goal the changing of the regime

in Iraq to bring to power a regime with

which we and the rest of the world can

have trustworthy relationships. That is

not going to be simple. It is not going

to come overnight. It involves an effort

to work with Iraqi opposition to Saddam

Hussein, to use some of the same

methods that were used in the cold

war, something as simple and yet as effective

as Radio Free Europe which

spoke so powerfully to the hopes and

dreams of people who lived so long

under the tyranny of the Soviets, the

Communists, and do the same for the

people who live under the tyranny of

Saddam Hussein, to work with our allies

to build the kind of alternative

that will raise our hopes for peace in

that region of the world.

Those discussions about what may

follow an air attack on Iraq are important.

They are not easy. They deserve

to be debated.

For now I think what is most important

is that people of both parties have

come together on the floor of the Senate

to speak to this challenge to international

law, to America’s vital interests,

and to say, directly or indirectly,

‘‘Mr. President, if you, as Commander

in Chief, act in this circumstance, in

this crisis, you and the troops who

serve under you will have broad bipartisan

support in the U.S. Senate.’’