Mr. President, I

thank my friend and colleague, Senator

BOXER, for her excellent remarks,

and those Senators from New Jersey

and New York who joined her. She has

made a very impassioned message. It is

a correct message. I hope people listen.

I also am deeply saddened by recent

comments made by the President and

Vice President which imply that Democrats

are not protective of our Nation’s

security. Nothing is further from the

truth.

There is no shortage of courage and

bravery and patriotism on this side of

the aisle. We, too, have our heroes who

prove that: Senator MAX CLELAND, Senator

DANIEL INOUYE, former Senator

Bob Kerrey, and Senator JOHN KERRY,

people who fought with bravery and

distinction in major conflicts this Nation

has had.

Even to imply the Democrats are not

interested in the security of the American

people is not only wrong, but in

the present pre-election period I believe

it is also base.

Last night, it was reported the Vice

President went so far as to state that

American security would be enhanced

if a certain GOP candidate was elected

to the House of Representatives. This

very statement, carried by major newspapers,

jaundiced any fair discussion in

this pre-election period.

One might ask why? The reason is

both the President and the Vice President

have an extraordinary bully pulpit

with a very long reach. It makes up

about 95 percent of everything that

reaches the American public; the remaining

5 percent is scattered among

whoever is able to receive it.

If this debate is politicized in the

heat of an election and the decision is

made for the wrong reasons—out of

fear; if we do not carry out the public

trust that is invested in us and make

the decision for the right reasons, then

we betray our trust. And no election is

worth doing that.

I share the concern of the majority

leader, and I hope it is not too late to

end this politicization. But there is

only one way. Shortly, we in Congress

will begin debate on whether to authorize

the President the authority to use

force against Iraq. It is, in effect, a declaration

of war. The President has sent

a draft resolution. He made his case before

the United Nations. Today he

seeks the support of the international

community. Now it is our job, our constitutional

duty, to debate this resolution.

But we must do so in an atmosphere

that is true. The decision to go

to war is perhaps the most grave and

significant decision any nation makes.

It is a decision that must be made on

its own merits, with a timetable determined

by the cause and the case and

not based on political considerations

and upcoming elections. I believe that

deeply.

A declaration of war against Iraq is

the most serious decision many Members

will ever make as Senators. It is a

life or death decision for the American

men and women we put into harm’s

way, for the innocent Iraqi people who

will be killed, for the repercussions it

will have throughout the Persian Gulf,

the Middle East and the Arab world,

and throughout our own country and

the rest of the world.

Congress must not rush to judgment

before it has had ample opportunity to

answer the many questions that still

remain regarding why a war, a preemptive

war, should be fought at this time

against Iraq. For example, what is the

immediate threat to American security

to justify an attack on another sovereign

nation? How would such a war

be conducted? How would we respond

to Iraq’s use of chemical or biological

weapons, to an attack on Israel, or to a

ricochet of terrorist incidents in our

country and around the world? And

what are our responsibilities for postwar

stability once Saddam Hussein is

ousted? How do we prevent civil war

between the Sunnis and the Shias?

No one questions that Saddam Hussein

is an evil man, or the potential of

Iraq acquiring the nuclear capability

within the next 5 to 7 years is a possibility.

We believe it is. There is reason

to believe that Saddam Hussein has

squirreled away biological and chemical

weapons. But they are most likely

close to civilians: in tunnels, under

mosques, around schools and hospitals,

and inside palaces or in mobile vehicles.

This is not sufficient reason to preemptively

attack another sovereign nation—

for the first time in this Nation’s

history—without first being provoked

by an attack against our homeland,

our people, or our interests. It is not

sufficient reason to put our service

men and women in harm’s way when

there are real, viable options short of

war left on the table. There is no question

this country should take steps to

disarm Iraq. Saddam Hussein, with

chemical and biological weapons, represents

a real threat to his own people,

to the Middle East region, and to the

international security. The question is,

Is use of force the first option or the

last option? In my view, it should be

the last. In my view, working with the

international community, doing all we

can to disarm Iraq before jumping to

military force, remains an option.

If Saddam Hussein balks at inspectors,

if he starts playing games, if he

continues to thwart the will of the

international community, then the use

of force by the United States has a

moral imprimatur and is the only remaining

viable answer.

There is no question that Iraq is in

direct violation of international law,

numerous U.N. Security Council resolutions,

and that he poses a threat in

the region. Nobody debates that. But

there is no persuasive evidence that

Iraq is prepared to unleash its biological

or chemical weapons today. Although

he used them against the Kurds

in 1987 and 1988, and against Iran in

their decade-long war, he has not used

them in over 10 years, and he knows

what will happen to him if he does. He

may be homicidal but he is not suicidal.

Likewise, there is no persuasive evidence

that he possesses nuclear weapons

today. He may be trying to gain

these weapons, but he remains years

away. So instead of rushing to war, I

believe we should proceed in a calm,

methodical, and nonpolitical manner.

The United States should work

through the United Nations Security

Council—as the President himself suggested

in a September 12 speech to the

United Nations and as Secretary of

State Colin Powell is now trying to do

to obtain full and unconditional access

for arms inspectors, and hopefully accompanied

by a United Nations military

force.

We should seek the complete destruction

of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction

and the means to deliver them.

This approach should be our first option,

not window dressing or an option

to be dismissed out-of-hand. And we

should do this not for idealistic reasons

but because it is in our national security

interests to do so.

Indeed, the benefit of pursuing a multilateral

approach was seen clearly

when Saudi Arabia suggested that, if

the United States were working

through the United Nations, it would

grant U.S. forces access to its bases.

Action against Iraq becomes much

more complicated, from a military perspective,

if there are no landing or flyover

rights in other Arab countries;

and managing the aftermath becomes

much more difficult if we find the entire

Arab world against us.

So I believe that if the United States

fails in its efforts to compel Iraqi compliance

with a United Nations inspection,

verification, and destruction regime—

either because other countries

threaten a veto in the Security Council

or the United Nations is unable to muster

the muscle and will to enforce its

own resolutions—then the United

States, with or without willing partners

in the international community,

must be prepared to go it alone.

But we must be clear. If we go to war,

it should be to force Iraq to disarm.

This time, too, it is critical that the

United States stays the course on the

war on terror.

In every book you read on Osama bin

Laden, you see that he believed that we

would never stay the course in a war

against him. We would hit a camp once

and then disappear. As happened before,

we would go to Somalia, get into

trouble in Mogadishu, and we would

turn tail and run. Bin Laden bet on

that. He cannot be right about that. We

have much to do to win this war.

Many of those who perpetrated the

September 11 terrorist attacks remain

at large, including two-thirds of the al-

Qaida leadership; the Taliban and its

leader, Mullah Omar; not to mention

thousands of terrorists sympathetic to

al-Qaida worldwide, including in our

own country.

Afghanistan remains a fragile and

unstable country. The United States

must continue our efforts to rebuild

this country. We cannot repeat what

was done to it since 1979. We must continue

our efforts to rebuild Afghanistan,

the Afghan economy, to assure

that the Taliban and al-Qaida do not

return to power there—because they

will if they can. We must protect and

stabilize the Government of Hamid

Karzai. And any effort in Iraq must not

detract from our war on terror.

The President has rightly pointed

out that the war on terror will be a

long and hard-fought battle, and it is

not just against al-Qaida. It is

Hezbollah, which equals al-Qaida in its

reach, in its viciousness, in its malevolence,

and its evil. We must not take

our eye off this ball. The President

must come forward to explain not only

how we fight this two-front war without

allowing one front to jeopardize

our interests in the other, but also

what we would do in the event of a

major strike against Israel.

I have come to this floor before and

indicated that there is ample evidence

that rockets are being shipped out of

Iran, through Syria and into southern

Lebanon—Katyusha rockets with extended

range anywhere from 8,000 to

10,000, to hit Israel’s industrial zone

north of Haifa, should we attack Iraq.

What do we do then? What is our

commitment, and what will the other

Arab States do? I think we ought to

know this. I think as prudent leaders,

as part of a debate in the greatest deliberative

body in the world, we ought

to know these things before going into

it, so there are no surprises.

Finally, it is critical that if and as

we consider any use of force against

Iraq that we have a clear understanding

of the aftermath. Who would

do the rebuilding? Who would pay for

it? Who would run any new government?

And could that government provide

security? Could it prevent a bigger

and more brutal battle between the

Sunni and the Shia.

That is not a question to overlook.

Read the history on Iraq. You will see

the brutality and the viciousness, the

attack of one tribe on the other that

has characterized Iraqi history from

the time of ancient Mesopotamia.

There are a lot of grievances out there

to be settled, big grievances between

the Shia majority and the ruling Sunni

Baath party minority.

As General Shalikashvili made clear

in his recent testimony before the Senate

Armed Services Committee, planning

for a post-conflict situation, winning

the peace, is every bit as important

as planning for the conflict itself.

And until the planning for post-war

Iraq is in place—and it is not now—we

should not rush to initiate combat. In

fact, every general with whom I have

talked—and I have talked with several—

has urged caution. Every general

with whom I have talked, privately, believes

this war could end up being

much more difficult than some expect

it to be.

So to simply rush ahead and authorize

the President to use force now, before

these questions are answered, and

without an imminent threat—save

what some hope to gain from this issue

in the elections—would be a grave

error.

Congress must debate these issues

fully, thoroughly, on a schedule, and

with a timetable driven only by the

merits of the issues. We must then

move forward to pass a resolution tailored

to the specific circumstances and

giving the President the proper authority

he needs to safeguard U.S. national

interests.

So much is at stake here. American

lives are at stake. We do not know how

many, but I know one thing: It is not

going to be like the gulf war. This war

will be in cities. This will be street to

street and house to house. We might

send in the B–2s, the B–52s and the 117s,

and they might drop huge numbers of

laser-guided missiles and precision

bombs. We will kill a lot of people. And

then do we risk what may happen with

the chemical and biologicals squirreled

away? Do they go up in those attacks?

Or are they released over innocent people?

I have never heard one person discuss

this, and it is time that we do so.

We are not a mercenary nation. This

is not our heart. It is not our soul. And

we have never engaged in a preemptive

attack on another sovereign nation.

It may well be that untold numbers

of lives are at stake elsewhere in the

Persian Gulf, in the Middle East, and

yes, right here in the USA.

Matters of war and peace, of life and

death, must not be held in the grip of

shortsighted, partisan rancor. I for one

refuse to make them so. I respectfully

suggest the Administration do the

same. The stakes are simply too high.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence

of a quorum.