Mr. President, first of

all, let me thank my friend the distinguished

Senator from Ohio for including

me in his unanimous consent request.

I will briefly speak about an

amendment.

We all understand that the issue is

going to come before this body to send

activity into Syria. I am very much opposed

to any kind of force in Syria, but

if it happens, we want to be sure there

is some protection there. So I have an

amendment that even if my amendment

passes, I will still oppose the effort

of this President to send activity

into Syria, and I believe it would precipitate

a war.

My amendment is very simple. If the

President takes military action

against Syria, sequestration of our

Armed Forces would be delayed for 1

year. We are talking about the fiscal

year where we would take another $52

billion out of our military.

What Asad has done and continues to

do is reprehensible, but the United

States can’t afford another war given

the current state of our military. The

threats from Syria and the Middle East

are not emerging threats. These

threats have been around for decades.

We knew they were there. There is

nothing new about them. Yet the readiness

capabilities of our military continue

to be decimated by drastic budget

cuts.

Sixteen Air Force combat flying

squadrons have been grounded. We finally,

after 3 months, put them back in

the air again, and right now we know it

costs more to get them back in a state

of readiness than the money we saved

from grounding them for 3 months. Our

naval fleet has been reduced to historically

low levels, the end strength of

our ground forces has been cut by more

than 100,000 personnel, and hundreds of

thousands of DOD civilian employees

have been furloughed. Just in my State

of Oklahoma, in one of my installations,

14,000 civilian employees have

been furloughed.

We can’t have it both ways—continuing

to cut the funding of our military

while still expecting to meet our

national security requirements. As

military readiness and capabilities decline,

we accept greater risk, and, as I

have always said, risk equals lives.

Every time we have a hearing, we have

our combatant commanders come in

and talk about the risks. Risk means

lives. As I have always said, risk equals

lives, and allowing these cuts to continue

while proposing to send our

forces into harm’s way is immoral and

reprehensible.

Over the last week I have heard a lot

from the President and his administration

about how any action in Syria will

be limited. I suggest there is no such

thing as limited war. Once we decide to

strike, we can’t predict where it will

end or how the situation might escalate.

Let’s not forget that we have

troops currently on the ground in Jordan

and Turkey, marines guarding our

Embassies, and sailors and airmen stationed

around the region. We have already

heard that Iran is ordering its

terrorist proxies to retaliate by attacking

U.S. interests in the region, including

our Embassy in Iraq. The State Department

has ordered nonessential personnel

to evacuate our Embassy in

Lebanon. The threats to our forces are

real.

I wish to read for my colleagues excerpts

from a letter that was written

by two ladies, Rebekah Sanderlin and

Molly Blake. These are spouses of two

of our servicemen. They are responding—

much more eloquently than I

could ever hope to—to the immense

hardship our military is enduring

under sequestration and to the misguided

belief that a military strike on

Syria can be done in isolation—that it

won’t affect our troops and their families.

I ask unanimous consent that the entire

letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material

was ordered to be printed in the

RECORD, as follows:

Again, that is a quote from two of

the wives of our current servicemen. I

hope all of my colleagues will read this

letter. I hope they understand that the

decisions we make this week about

whether to go to war in Syria have a

human dimension.

If we expect the brave men and

women in our military to go to foreign

lands and risk their lives on our behalf,

we have a moral obligation to ensure

that they and their families have the

support and the resources that are required.

Sequestration has already inflicted

severe damage on our military,

and we are now only a couple of weeks

from another $52 billion being slashed

from an already devastated military

budget.

I have been clear that I don’t support

the President’s call for military action

in Syria. He still hasn’t presented Congress

and the American people with a

plan for what he wants to accomplish,

how he intends to accomplish it, or

how he intends to pay for it. Will the

President pay for this operation with

more furloughs and by grounding more

squadrons again? The CNO has already

come forward and stated that if operations

against Syria extend into October,

he won’t be able to afford it and

will likely require supplemental funding

from Congress.

Furthermore, the President hasn’t

told us how a strike in Syria fits into

a broader strategy for the Middle East.

What we decide to do is not just about

Syria. It is bigger than that. This is

about the growing threat from Iran,

stability in the Middle East, and our

commitment to Israel and allies and

our ability to respond to other contingencies

that are there.

I recall knowing what was going to

happen. This is 41⁄2 years ago, back

when President Obama was first elected,

his first election. I knew that when

he came out with his first budget, he

was going to do something devastating

to the military. So I put myself into

Afghanistan, knowing, with the tanks

going back and forth, that I would be

able to get the interest and the attention

of the American people, and it

worked. So in that very first budget 41⁄2

years ago, he did away with the early

fifth-generation bomber then, the F–22;

did away with our future combat system—

the first ground capability increase

in about 50 years; did away with

our lift capacity, the C–17. Then, the

worst thing, which I hope doesn’t turn

out to create the worst problem for

America, he did away with the groundbased

operation in Poland. That was

just the first budget. That was 41⁄2

years ago. Since that time, in his extended

budget, he has taken $487 billion

out of the military, and with sequestration

it will be another $1⁄2 trillion.

This just can’t happen.

It is not just me who is saying this.

People would expect it more from me.

I am the ranking member on the Senate

Armed Services Committee. I have

gone there and worked with these guys

and noticed the problems they have. I

would suggest that not just me but Admiral

Winnefeld, who is the second

highest military guy, the Vice Chairman

of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said:

There could be, for the first time in my career—

An admiral speaking now, the second

highest person in our military—

instances where we may be asked to respond

to a crisis and we will have to say we

cannot.

And then we go to the very top person,

General Dempsey, the Chairman of

the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who said,

‘‘Our military force is so degraded, so

unready, it would be immoral to use

force.’’

I only say this because we are going

to be facing this, and I would be opposed

to this even with my amendment

to postpone the sequestration of the

military for 1 year. However, if that

passes, I will still oppose this taking

place. I don’t think many people in

America realize what has happened to

our military under the Obama administration.

Well, I have just stated what has happened.

This is certainly not a time

when we would use force in Syria. Keep

in mind that General Dempsey said it

would be immoral to use force, we are

so degraded, and that is exactly what

we will be voting on in the next couple

of days.

With that, I yield the floor.