That would be a big

contradiction.

I will just yield to Senator LEVIN to

answer the question and make his

opening statement.

Mr. President, I would

just like to echo what Senator MCCAIN

said about Senator MENENDEZ. I would

like to, for the record, note that the

tide of war in Syria changed today because

of what is happening on the floor

of the Senate. That may be hard for

people to understand, but I really do

not think so.

How do you change the tide of battle?

You make it certain to the world that

Asad will go, and you provide hope to

those who are fighting him that they

will prevail. I would suggest that a bipartisan

consensus is forming in the

Senate that now is the time to do

more, not less, when it comes to Syria,

including arming the rebels—the right

rebels, the right opposition, with the

right weapons, which will eventually

change the tide of battle.

So to those who have been following

this debate about Syria, to those who

have been in the fight trying to topple

this regime, I cannot stress to you how

important today is in your cause. When

you get Senator LEVIN and Senator

MENENDEZ, two institutional, important

figures because of their chairmanships,

but beyond that, important because

of who they are and what they

bring to every debate around national

security, combined with Senator

MCCAIN and others, you have turned

the tide in Washington.

As to Senator MCCAIN, he has been

talking in the most eloquent terms for

at least a couple of years about stopping

this war in Syria, ending the Asad

regime and replacing it with something

better. He has been right, as he usually

is. But now is not the time to look

backward, it is to look forward.

I think an effort by the Senate and

the House to acknowledge that the tide

of war needs to change and we should

be bolder in our support for the opposition

is going to increase the likelihood

of a peaceful solution through diplomacy.

The Russians have to know, after

today, if they know anything about

American politics, the game has

changed when it comes to Asad, and

this is a monumental sea change in

terms of the war in Syria by having

four Senators who care about such

matters of foreign policy to speak out

and say we will support arming the

rebels and being more involved militarily.

To the opposition, this is a great day

for you. To Asad, this seals your fate.

Now, what do we do and how do we do

it? It will not all end tomorrow because

of this colloquy today, but we are well

on the way to ending this war. Here is

the choice: The current regime, which

is evil to the core, and the imperfect

opposition, which has been infected by

radical Islam—you can fix the second

one; you cannot fix the first. It is that

simple to me.

The sooner the war ends the better,

not only for saving people in Syria

from further slaughter, but preventing

what I think would be an erosion of our

national security interests in four

areas. If this war goes 6 more months,

a failed state will emerge in Syria. It

will be so fractured you cannot put it

back together.

The 6,000 al-Qaida associated fighters

will grow in number, and there will be

a safe haven in Syria like there was in

Afghanistan. That is not good for us.

Unlike Afghanistan, there is enough

chemical weapons in Syria to kill

thousands if not millions of Americans

and people who are our allies. I worry

greatly not only that chemical weapons

have been used in Syria on the opposition

by the regime, but those same

chemical weapons will be used in the

future by radical Islamists against us.

The next bomb that goes off in America

may have more than nails and glass

in it. The only reason millions of

Americans or thousands of Americans,

hundreds of thousands have not been

killed by radical Islamists is they cannot

get the weapons to kill that many

of us. They would if they could.

I have never seen a better opportunity

for radical Islamists to get

ahold of weapons of mass destruction

than I see in Syria today. Every day

that goes by their opportunity to acquire

some of these weapons grows dramatically.

If you ask me what I worry

the most about with Syria and why we

should get involved, it is for that very

reason. If these weapons get compromised,

they are going to fall into

the hands of the people who will use

them against us, and to believe otherwise

would be incredibly naive.

Jordan. Probably the most stabilizing

figure in the Mideast in these

dangerous times is the King of Jordan.

His country is being overrun by refugees.

If this war goes on 6 more

months, that is probably the end of his

kingdom because it will create economic

chaos and political instability.

He will be a victim of the civil war in

Syria, and it will have monumental

consequences for our national security.

As we talk about Syria and chemical

weapons falling into radical Islamists’

hands, we are dealing with a radical regime

in Iran that is marching toward

building a nuclear weapon. If you think

the ayatollahs in Iran are trying to

build a nuclear powerplant at the bottom

of a mountain, you are wrong.

They are trying to build a nuclear

weapon to ensure their survivability.

God only knows what they would do

with nuclear technology. But if you believe

what they say, they would wipe

Israel off the map, and we would be

next. I tend to believe what they say.

If you allow Syria to continue to deteriorate

and have a hands-off policy

toward Asad, then I think you are

sending the worst possible signal to

Iran. As Senator LEVIN said, really the

only ally Iran has today is Asad in

Syria. How can we convince the Iranians

we are serious about their nuclear

problem when we do not seem to

be very serious about Asad using chemical

weapons against his own people?

What a terrible signal to send at one of

the most important times.

I would end with this thought: This

bipartisan consensus that is emerging

today is going to pay great dividends.

It is going to be helpful to the President.

We can end this war sooner rather

than later. But no matter what happens,

there is going to be a second war

in Syria, unfortunately.

That second war is going to be between

radical Islamists who want to

turn Syria into some kind of al-Qaidainspired

state, and the overwhelming

majority of Syrians who want to live a

better life and be our friends, not our

enemies.

This war will occur after the fall of

Asad. But it will end the right way.

The sooner we get the first war over,

the shorter the second war will be. I

think we can bring this war to a close

without boots on the ground. The sooner

we act the better.

One last thought. To the opposition,

you would be helping your cause if you

would let the world know that you do

not want Asad’s chemical weapons;

that the new Syria will not be a state

that wants weapons of mass destruction;

that you would agree these weapons

should be controlled by the international

community and destroyed;

that you would agree to an international

force coming on the ground

with your blessing the day after Asad

falls to secure these weapons and destroy

them for all time. I think you

would be helping your cause.

So I say to Senator MCCAIN, I really

appreciate his leadership for a couple

of years. But persistence does matter

in politics and all things that are important.

I think the Senator’s persistence

is paying off.

I say to Senator MENENDEZ and Senator

LEVIN, what they have done today

joining up in a bipartisan fashion is

going to pay great dividends for our

own national security interests. The

way forward is pretty clear.

I say to President Obama, we want to

be your ally. We want to be your supporter.

We want you to get more involved,

not less. We realize it is hard.

We realize there are risks no matter

what we do. But as Senator MCCAIN

said before, the risk of doing nothing

by continuing on the current track is

far greater than getting involved in

ending the war sooner.

I thank the Senator

for his question. It was one of the most

compelling trips I have ever made to

the Middle East. We went to Turkey,

Jordan, and we went to a refugee camp

in Jordan. Some 40,000 Syrian children

are now in Jordanian schools. The burden

on Jordan is immense, but when

you talk to the people in the camps,

what they have gone through and what

their loved ones have gone through is

heartbreaking.

From a national point of view, once

you visit the camps, you understand

what is at stake. They tell you about

radical Islamists moving in. They want

no part of them but at the end of the

day they are having more influence because

we are not in the fight. You can

do this without boots on the ground.

The most chilling thing they tell us,

which Senator MCCAIN, has been echoing

for a long time, is their children

are watching the United States. Like it

or not, we have the reputation in the

world that we can do almost anything.

Well, we can’t do almost anything,

but we are seen as a force for good. The

people in Syria are beside themselves

wondering where is America. America,

to them, is an idea. They want to be

like us because it means freedom, and

it means economic opportunity. It

means having a say about your children’s

future. They are dumbfounded

that we are not more involved, given

the stakes that exist in Syria. They

tell us without any hesitation that the

young people of Syria will remember

this moment. They will hold this

against us. I think I know what the

Senator is telling us.

Here is the good news: There is still

time to act. It doesn’t have to end that

way. The conditions in Syria are horrible.

The refugee camps were beyond

imagination. The U.N. is doing a great

job, but they are running out of money.

Jordan is about to fall if we don’t stop

this war.

From a human point of view, we have

got to get this war over and America

needs to be seen as part of the solution,

not part of the problem. From a national

security point of view, Syria is

going to become a nightmare for the

whole world, including the United

States.