Mr. President, many

have spent months reviewing the issue

on advisability of invading Iraq in the

near future, from hearings and meeting

on the process and the very important

role of Congress to the difficult questions

of substance, including foreign

policy and military implications. After

my own review and carefully listening

to hundreds of Wisconsin citizens in

person, I spoke on the floor on Thursday,

September 26. I indicated my opposition

to the original draft use of

force authorization by the President. I

also used that opportunity to raise

some very important questions to

which I needed answers before supporting

a narrower and more responsible

resolution.

Now, after many more meetings and

reading articles and attending briefings,

listening to my colleagues’

speeches, and especially listening to

the President’s speech in Cincinnati on

Monday, I still do not believe the

President and the administration have

adequately answered the critical questions.

They have not yet met the important

burden to persuade Congress

and the American people we should invade

Iraq at this time.

Both in terms of the justifications

for an invasion and in terms of the mission

and the plan for the invasion, the

administration’s arguments do not add

up. They do not add up to a coherent

basis for a new major war in the middle

of our current challenging fight

against the terrorism of al-Qaida and

related organizations. Therefore, I cannot

support the resolution for the use

of force before the Senate.

My colleagues, my focus today is on

the wisdom of this specific resolution,

vis-a-vis Iraq, as opposed to discussing

the notion of an expanded doctrine of

preemption, which the President has

articulated on several occasions. However,

I associate myself with the concerns

eloquently raised by Senator

KENNEDY and Senator BYRD and others

that this could well represent a disturbing

change in our overall foreign

and military policy. This includes

grave concerns about what such a preemption-

plus policy will do to our relationship

with our allies, to our national

security, and to the cause of

world peace in so many regions of the

world where such a doctrine could trigger

very dangerous actions with very

minimal justification.

I want to be clear about something.

None of this is to say that I don’t agree

with the President on much of what he

has said about the fight against terrorism

and even what he has said about

Iraq. I agree, post-9/11, we face, as the

President said, a long and difficult

fight against terrorism. We must be

very patient and very vigilant, and we

must be ready to act and make some

very serious sacrifices.

With regard to Iraq, I agree, Iraq presents

a genuine threat, especially in

the form of weapons of mass destruction,

chemical, biological, and potentially

nuclear weapons. I agree that

Saddam Hussein is exceptionally dangerous

and brutal, if not uniquely so,

as the President argues. And I support

the concept of regime change. Saddam

Hussein is one of several despots whom

the international community should

condemn and isolate with the hope of

new leadership in those nations.

Yes, I agree; if we do this Iraq invasion,

I hope Saddam Hussein will actually

be removed from power this time.

I agree, we cannot do nothing with regard

to Saddam Hussein in Iraq. We

must act. We must act with serious

purpose and stop the weapons of mass

destruction and stop Saddam Hussein. I

agree, a return to the inspections regime

of the past alone is not a serious,

credible policy.

I also believe and agree, as important

and as preferable as U.N. action and

multilateral solutions to this problem

are, we cannot give the United Nations

the ability to veto our ability to

counter this threat to our people. We

retain and will always retain the right

of self-defense, including self-defense

against weapons of mass destruction.

When such a threat requiring self-defense

would present itself—and I am

skeptical that is exactly what we are

dealing with here—then we could, if

necessary, act alone, including militarily.

These are all areas where I agree

with the administration. However, I

am increasingly troubled by the seemingly

shifting justifications for an invasion

at this time. My colleagues, I

am not suggesting there has to be only

one justification for such a dramatic

action, but when the administration

moves back and forth from one argument

to another, it undercuts the

credibility of the case and the belief in

its urgency. I believe this practice of

shifting justifications has much to do

with the troubling phenomenon of

many Americans questioning the administration’s

motives in insisting on

action at this time.

What am I talking about? I am talking

about the spectacle of the President

and senior administration officials

citing a reported connection to

al-Qaida one day, weapons of mass destruction

the next day, Saddam Hussein’s

treatment of his own people on

another day, and then on some days

the issue of Kuwaiti prisoners of war.

For some of these, we may well be

willing to send some 250,000 Americans

into harm’s way; for others, frankly,

probably not.

These litanies of various justifications—

whether the original draft resolution

discussions or the new White

House resolution, or, regrettably

throughout the President’s speech in

Cincinnati—in my view set the bar for

an alternative to a U.S. invasion so

high I am afraid it almost locks in—it

almost requires—a potentially extreme

and reckless solution to these problems.

I am especially troubled by these

shifting justifications because I and

most Americans strongly support the

President on the use of force in response

to the attacks on September 11,

2001. I voted for S.J. Res. 23—the use of

force resolution—to go after al-Qaida

and the Taliban and those associated

with the tragedies of September 11, and

I strongly supported military actions

pursuant to S.J. Res. 23. But the relentless

attempt to link 9/11 and the

issue of Iraq has been disappointing to

me for months, culminating in the

President’s singularly unpersuasive attempt

in Cincinnati to intertwine 9/11

and Iraq, to make the American people

believe there are no important differences

between the perpetrators of 9/

11 and Iraq.

I believe it is dangerous for the

world—and especially dangerous for

us—to take the tragedy of 9/11 and the

word ‘‘terrorism’’ in all their powerful

emotion and then too easily apply

them to many other situations—situations

that surely need our serious attention,

but are not necessarily the

same as individuals and organizations

who have shown a willingness to fly

suicide planes into the World Trade

Center and into the Pentagon.

Let me say the President is right, we

have to view the world, the threats,

and our own national security in a very

different light since 9/11. There are

shocking new threats. But it is not

helpful to use virtually any strand or

extreme rhetoric to suggest the new

threat is the same as other preexisting

threats.

I think common sense tells us they

are not the same. They cannot so easily

be lumped together as the President

sought to do in Cincinnati.

I have reviewed the intermittent efforts

to suggest a connection of 9/11

and Saddam Hussein, or suggest the

possibility such a connection has developed

since 9/11. I want to be very clear.

In fact, if there was a connection in

planning for the 9/11 attacks by Saddam

Hussein or his agents and the perpetrators

of 9/11 and al-Qaida, I have already

voted for military action. I have

no objection. But if it is not, if this is

premised on some case that has supposedly

been made with regard to a

subsequent coalition between al-Qaida

and the Iraqi government, I think the

President has to do better. He has to do

better than the shoddy piecing together

of flimsy evidence that contradicts

the very briefings we have received

by various agencies. I am not

hearing the same things at the briefings

I am hearing from the President’s

top officials.

In fact, on March 11 of this year, Vice

President CHENEY, following a meeting

with Tony Blair, raised the possibility

of weapons of mass destruction falling

into the hands of terrorists. He said:

In March, there was a potential marriage.

Then the Vice President said on September

8, without evidence—and no

evidence has been given since that

time—that there are:

We have seen no proof of that.

Finally, the Secretary of Defense follows

on September 27 of this year, and

says:

I don’t know where this comes from.

This so-called ‘‘potential marriage’’ in

March is beginning to sound like a 25th

wedding anniversary at this point.

The facts just aren’t there. At least

they have not been presented to me in

the situations where they should have

been presented to me as an elected

Member of this body. In other words,

the administration appears to use 9/11

and the language of terrorism and the

connection to Iraq too loosely—almost

like a bootstrap.

For example, I heard the President

say in Cincinnati that Iraq and al-

Qaida both regard us as a common

enemy. Of course they do. Who else are

we going to attack in the near future

on that basis alone?

Or do we see an attempt to stretch

the notion of harboring terrorists? I

agree with the President, if any country

is actively harboring and assisting

terrorists involved in 9/11, we have to

act against them. But I don’t think you

can bring to the definition of harboring

terrorists the simple presence of some

al-Qaida members somewhere in Iraq.

After all, apparently we have al-Qaida

agents active in our country as well.

They are present in our Nation as well.

How can this be a sufficient basis on its

own?

Therefore, without a better case for

an al-Qaida connection to Saddam Hussein,

this proposed invasion must stand

on its own merit—not on some notion

that those who question this invasion

don’t thoroughly condemn and want to

see the destruction of the perpetrators

of 9/11 and similar terrorist attacks on

the United States.

Invasion of Iraq must stand on its

own—not just because it is different

than the fight against the perpetrators

of 9/11, but because it may not be consistent

with and may even be harmful

to the top national security issue of

this country. And that is the fight

against terrorism and the perpetrators

of the crimes of 9/11.

In fact, I am so pleased to see one of

the most eloquent spokesmen on this

viewpoint here in the Senate Chamber,

Senator GRAHAM, who has done a terrific

job of trying to point out our top

priorities in this area. He said:

I ask: Is this war against terrorism

going so terribly well when we see the

possible explosion of the French tanker

in Yemen, when we see the tremendous

difficulties in trying to pursue stability

in Afghanistan itself, and when

we realize we are not certain at all

whether Mr. Osama bin Laden is alive

or dead? Will the invasion of Iraq encourage

our allies and Islamic friends

to help us in the fight against terrorism,

or just make them extremely

nervous?

I met with a group of African Ambassadors

the other day in my role as

chairman of the Africa Subcommittee

of the Foreign Relations Committee.

They told me various people were placing

bets on what country would be next

after Iraq under this new doctrine the

President is putting forward. Will this

idea of invading Iraq at this time, on

this case, on these merits, help or hurt

cooperation in our fight against terrorism,

against the known murderers

of Americans who are known to be

plotting more of the same?

I am especially dismayed at the weak

response to the potential drain on our

military capability and resources in

our fight against terrorism, if we go

forward with this invasion at this time.

The administration likes to quickly

say, whenever asked whether we can do

this and fight the war against terrorism—

they just simply say we can do

both. There is no proof. There is no

real assurance of this.

I find these answers glib, at best.

When former Secretary of State Kissinger

was asked in this regard, he

said:

That is the only explanation the

former Secretary of State gave us on

this tough question.

But let’s look at what the current

Secretary of State, Colin Powell, said

in response to a similar question. He

said:

That is all he said. Now, that is a

pretty weak reassurance, to me, that

such an enormous undertaking will not

call into question some of our other

military efforts and priorities.

What about what we are doing in

Bosnia? What about what we are doing

in Kosovo? What about all the resources

stretching from the Philippines

all the way to portions of the former

Soviet Union, to the Middle East, to

parts of Africa, that are being employed

in the fight against terrorism?

What about the fact we are using our

National Guards and Reserves, many

times within our country, to protect

our own citizens at public events with

regard to the challenge of the fight

against terrorism?

All of this, and an invasion of Iraq,

too? I wonder. As mighty as we are, I

wonder if we are not very close to

being overextended. Invasion of Iraq in

the next few weeks or months could, in

fact, be very counterproductive. In

fact, it could risk our national security.

In any event, I oppose this resolution

because of the continuing unanswered

questions, including the very important

questions about what the mission

is here, what the nature of the operation

will be, what will happen concerning

weapons of mass destruction in

Iraq as the attack proceeds and afterward,

and what the plan is after the attack

is over.

In effect, we are being asked to vote

on something that is unclear. We do

not have the answers to these questions.

We are being asked to vote on

something that is almost unknowable

in terms of the information we have

been given.

In my judgment, the issue that presents

the greatest potential threat to

U.S. national security—Iraq’s pursuit

of weapons of mass destruction—has

not been addressed in any comprehensive

way by the administration to date.

Of course, I know we don’t need to

know all the details, and we don’t have

to be given all the details, and we

shouldn’t be given all the details, but

we have to be given some kind of a reasonable

explanation.

Before we vote on this resolution, we

need a credible plan for securing WMD

sites and not allowing materials of concern

to slip away during some chaotic

course of action. I know that is a tall

order, but it is a necessary demand.

As I said, I agree with the administration

when it asserts that returning

to the same restricted weapons inspection

regime of the recent past is not a

credible policy for addressing the WMD

problem in Iraq. But there is nothing

credible about the ‘‘we will figure that

out later’’ approach we have heard to

date.

What if actors competing for power

in the post-Hussein world have access

to WMD? What if there is chaos in the

wake of the regime’s fall that provides

new opportunities for non-state actors,

including terrorist organizations, to

bid on the sinister items tucked away

in Iraq?

Some would say those who do not unquestionably

support the administration

are failing to provide for our national

security. But, I am sure of this:

these issues are critical to that security,

and I have yet to get any answers.

We need an honest assessment of the

commitment required of America. If

the right way to address this threat is

through internationally supported

military action in Iraq, and Saddam

Hussein’s regime falls, we will need to

take action to ensure stability in Iraq

and to help the country on the road to

reconstruction.

This could be very costly and time consuming.

It could involve the occupation—

the occupation—of a Middle

Eastern country. Now, this is not a

small matter: the American occupation

of a Middle Eastern country. Consider

the regional implications of that scenario:

the unrest in moderate states,

the calls for action against American

interests, the difficulty of bringing stability

to Iraq so we can extricate ourselves

in the midst of regional turmoil.

We need much more information

about how we propose to proceed so we

can weigh the costs and benefits to our

national security.

In Afghanistan, the Government of

President Karzai works under constant

threat, and instability plagues the

country outside of Kabul. Many Afghan

people are waiting for concrete indicators

that they have a stake in this new

Taliban-free future. The task is

daunting, and we only have just begun

that task.

What demands might be added in a

post-Saddam Iraq?

I do believe the American people are

willing to bear high costs to pursue a

policy that makes sense. But right

now, after all of the briefings, after all

of the hearings, and after all of the

statements, as far as I can tell, the administration

apparently intends to

wing it when it comes to the day after,

or, as others have suggested, the decade

after. I think that makes no sense

at all.

So, Mr. President, I believe to date

the administration has failed to answer

the key questions to justify the invasion

of Iraq at this time.

Yes, September 11 raises the emotional

stakes and raises legitimate new

questions. This makes the President’s

request understandable, but it does not

make it wise.

I am concerned the President is pushing

us into a mistaken and counterproductive

course of action. Instead of,

in his words, this action being ‘‘crucial

to win the war on terrorism,’’ I fear it

could have the opposite effect.

So this moment—in which we are responsible

for assessing the threat before

us, the appropriate response, and

the potential costs and consequences of

military action—this moment is of

grave importance. Yet there is something

hollow in our efforts. In all of the

administration’s public statements, its

presentations to Congress, and its exhortations

for action, Congress is urged

to provide this authority and approve

the use of our awesome military power

in Iraq without knowing much at all

about what we intend to do with it.

We are about to make one of the

weightiest decisions of our time within

a context of confused justifications and

vague proposals. We are urged to get on

board and bring the American people

with us, but we do not know where the

ship is sailing.

On Monday night, the President said

in Cincinnati: ‘‘We refuse to live in

fear.’’ I agree. But let us not overreact

or get tricked or get trapped out of

fear, either.

Mr. President, on the 11th of September,

2001, our country came under

attack, and the world suddenly seemed

shockingly small and unquestionably

dangerous. What followed that horror

continued to be frightening and disorienting:

anthrax attacks, color-coded

threat levels, report after report of terrorist

cells seemingly everywhere.

In the weeks and months since September

11, Americans have had to contend

with these changes and to come to

grips with the reality this could happen

again and there are forces planning

to do us harm, and we cannot unconditionally

guarantee our own safety.

In this new world, we cannot help but

sense the future is uncertain, our world

is disordered, unpredictable, up for

grabs. So when our leaders propose

taking action, Americans do not want

to resist. But they are resisting this

vague and worrisome proposal.

My constituents have voiced their

concerns in calls, at town meetings, in

letters, and through e-mails or faxes.

They are not calling for Congress to

bury its head in the sand. They are not

naively suggesting Saddam Hussein is

somehow misunderstood. But they are

asking questions that bear directly on

our national security, and they are

looking for answers that make sense.

They are setting the standard, just as

they should do, in a great democracy.

Their standard is high. We should

work together to develop a policy toward

Iraq that meets it.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence

of a quorum.