Mr. President, I will speak

for about 7 minutes. If any other Senator

wishes to speak, they may certainly

do so.

Mr. President, I want to address directly

the Senator’s amendment. He

talked about everything but his

amendment. His amendment is remarkable

because instead of allowing

the President to deal with the continuing

threat posed by Iraq, this

amendment would require the President

to identify an imminent threat;

that is to say, one that is immediate,

pressing, upon us, imminent. I suggest,

as a member of the Intelligence Committee

for almost 8 years, that it is virtually

impossible for us to know when

a threat is imminent, a threat posed by

a regime such as Saddam Hussein’s, or

a group of terrorists.

These people do not announce their

threats in advance. They conceal their

intentions, as well as their capabilities,

and it is very difficult for us to know

the precise moment at which the

threat is imminent.

So this amendment is remarkable because

it would literally force the President

to wait until the last minute in

order to take the action that is permitted

by the amendment.

There is a saying in the intelligence

community that we do not know what

we do not know. We find out later what

we did not know.

We did not know that Saddam Hussein,

for example, had gone to the extent

he had in the development of biological

and chemical weapons until defectors

came out of Iraq and told us

what he had done. We did not find out

about that through other intelligence.

Then we sent inspectors, and before

Saddam Hussein got it all hidden, they

were able to find some of it, at which

point he said: Oh, gosh I forgot about

that—or words to that effect.

We did not realize the extent to

which he had developed his nuclear capability

until after the gulf war was

over, when we learned that he was

years closer to having a nuclear weapon

than we had thought.

If Saddam Hussein had waited to attack

Kuwait, had not attacked Kuwait,

and gone ahead with his plans, he

would have had a nuclear capability before

the United States knew about it.

By then, it would have been too late.

My point is this: We may have pretty

good intelligence, but it is not good

enough to calibrate as closely as the

Senator’s amendment would require, to

wait until the moment when the President

says now it is imminent. And that

is the problem. Action has to be taken

when the threat is clear, when it is

known to be there, but we do not really

know exactly when he is going to make

his move.

As September 11 showed, if it showed

us anything, our intelligence is not

good enough to do that. We can know

there is a threat. We can know it is

growing, we can know it is continuing,

but we cannot know that moment when

it becomes imminent.

This amendment asks an impossibility

of the President: To prove that

the threat is imminent or at least to

wait until it is clear to him that the

threat is imminent. But we may never

know until it is too late that Saddam

Hussein has a nuclear weapon.

The Senator also complained about

this new doctrine of preemption, but I

would suggest that with respect to

Iraq, we are not talking about preemption,

we are talking about unfinished

business called the gulf war.

Every day the United States and the

United Kingdom fly airplanes, pursuant

to United Nations resolutions, to

enforce those resolutions—frankly, to

engage in aerial inspection called reconnaissance—

and they get shot at almost

every day. When they get shot at,

they either try to take out the radar

site or SAM missile site that is firing

at them after they have been shot at,

or what they try to do is knock it out

before they get shot at. Now, somebody

may call that preemption. I call it selfdefense

and common sense.

This is not some new doctrine we are

about to engage in that is going to

threaten world peace. This is the unfinished

business of the gulf war that is

authorized by United Nations resolutions

that we engage in every day and

that requires us to act in our own selfdefense.

It is also said that for the last 11

years, Saddam Hussein has not used his

weapons of mass destruction. So why

deal with this now? Why not wait until

the threat is imminent? Is that it? We

are supposed to put our trust in Saddam

Hussein? I am unwilling to place

the security of the United States of

America in the hands of the likes of

Saddam Hussein. I do not believe we

can trust him.

Because our intelligence is not good

enough to calibrate this threat to the

action that would be authorized by the

amendment, and because we cannot

trust Saddam Hussein, I support the

resolution that is before us and oppose

the amendment of the Senator from Illinois.

Finally, suggesting, as some have, although

I did not hear these words from

the Senator, that there has to be a

smoking gun—that is the concept behind

this notion of imminence—before

we can take action, is extraordinarily

misguided. Remember, a gun smokes

after it has been fired.

When I think of a smoking gun, I

think of the Pentagon and the World

Trade Center. I believe that the amendment

of the Senator from Illinois is

dangerous, misguided, and I hope my

colleagues will join me in defeating it.