Mr. President, before I

give my speech, I commend my friend,

the Senator from Ohio, Senator

DEWINE, for a very thoughtful presentation

this evening. He and I have had

many discussions about how difficult

this decision has been for both of us.

We have reached many of the same

conclusions. But I just want to salute

him for a very thoughtful and thorough

analysis of the resolution and the challenges

before us.

The decision to authorize the use of

military force is the most significant

vote that a Member of the Senate can

ever cast. The Constitution clearly

vests this responsibility in Congress, a

duty that rests heavily on the shoulders

of each and every Member.

As a Member of the Senate Armed

Services Committee, I am keenly

aware of the sacrifices and dangers

faced by our young men and women in

the military. They are ready to answer

the call to combat, ready to fight the

war against terrorism, ready to defend

our freedoms around the globe.

In the wake of the attacks on our

country on September 11, the Senate

vote to authorize the war against terrorism

was rapid, unanimous, and

clear-cut. By contrast, whether to authorize

the use of military force

against Iraq is a far more difficult and

complex question. It requires a thorough

analysis of the nature and urgency

of the threat and an evaluation

of all possible responses.

As a member of the Armed Services

Subcommittee on Emerging Threats,

and the Governmental Affairs Subcommittee

on International Security

and Proliferation, I have received

many briefings on the dangers posed by

lawless regimes in Iraq, Iran, and

North Korea during the past 5 years.

And during the past 2 months, I have

attended several highly classified, indepth

briefings on Iraq from the CIA,

the National Security Agency, the Department

of Defense, the State Department,

and the White House. I have

questioned the experts—I have questioned

them closely—including former

Defense Secretary James Schlesinger

and former National Security Adviser

Samuel Berger, as well as Secretary

Rumsfeld, at public hearings before the

Armed Services Committee.

I have read studies and assessments,

both classified and public, conducted

by the administration, the British

Joint Intelligence Committee, the

International Institute for Strategic

Studies, and many others. I talked at

length with Secretary Colin Powell

about the appropriate strategy to respond

to Iraq’s development of weapons

of mass destruction.

Let me first discuss my conclusions

about the nature and the extent of the

threat posed by the Iraqi regime and

its continued defiance of the United

Nations resolutions. In 1991, Iraq accepted

a cease-fire agreement in the

form of United Nations Security Council

Resolution 678, to end the gulf war.

The Iraqi regime was required to unconditionally

accept the destruction,

removal, or rendering harmless under

international supervision of all of its

chemical and biological agents.

In addition, the resolution prohibited

Iraq from acquiring or developing nuclear

weapons and required the destruction

of all ballistic missiles with a

range greater than 150 kilometers.

From a series of Iraqi declarations to

the U.N. subsequent to this resolution,

we know that Iraq, by its own admission,

had by 1991 produced thousands of

tons of deadly chemical weapons, such

as mustard gas, sarin, and VX, as well

as very large quantities of biological

agents, including anthrax and ricin.

Most experts believe Iraq’s declarations

grossly understated the true

sense of its chemical and biological

programs. But even the admitted

amounts were sufficient to kill hundreds

of thousands of people.

For a time in the 1990s, the U.N. inspectors

succeeded in destroying quantities

of these weapons, as well as the

associated production facilities, ballistic

missiles, and much of the infrastructure

for Iraq’s nuclear weapons

program. Subsequently, however, the

Iraqi regime’s harassment, obstruction,

and deception made it impossible for

the inspectors to continue their work,

and they were withdrawn.

At the time they left in 1998, the inspectors

were unable to account for

very large discrepancies between the

weapons that were declared and the

amounts that were destroyed. For example,

at least 1.5 tons of the deadly

nerve agent VX were unaccounted for.

Just under 10 milligrams of VX can

cause a quick and painful death.

The CIA has concluded all key aspects

of Iraq’s offensive biological and

chemical weapons program, including

research and development, production

and weaponization, are active and, in

some cases, larger and more advanced

than before the gulf war.

In addition to the weapons unaccounted

for in the post-gulf war inspections,

there is significant evidence that

since 1998, Saddam has expanded his

stockpile of chemical and biological

weapons; rebuilt and expanded manufacturing

sites, including mobile biological

production facilities; developed

more effective delivery systems, such

as unmanned drones; and sought to

procure materials for a nuclear bomb.

The reports demonstrating Iraq’s violation

of U.N. resolutions are numerous,

compelling, and indisputable.

They are based on the findings of U.N.

weapons inspectors, credible reports

from Iraqi defectors, sophisticated surveillance

equipment, and other strong

evidence.

Even more troubling is the evidence

compiled by the American and British

intelligence agencies that Iraq has converted

its L–29 jet trainers to allow

them to be used as unmanned aerial vehicles,

capable of delivering chemical

and biological agents over a large area.

While the evidence of Iraq’s pursuit

of biological and chemical weapons is

overwhelming, it is more difficult to

determine the state of Iraq’s development

of nuclear weapons. Numerous reports

suggest, however, a renewed determination

by Saddam Hussein to obtain

the materials for a nuclear bomb.

A September report by the International

Institute for Strategic Studies

paints a chilling picture of Saddam’s

quest for nuclear weapons. Had the gulf

war not intervened, Iraq ‘‘could have

accumulated a nuclear stockpile of a

dozen or so weapons by the end of the

decade,’’ according to the report.

It further concludes that the scientific

and technical expertise of Iraq’s

nuclear program remains intact, and

the British Government has revealed

that Iraqi nuclear personnel were ordered

to resume work on nuclear

projects in 1998.

According to British intelligence,

Iraq has also attempted to obtain uranium

from Africa. This is extraordinarily

troubling. Since Iraq has no

active civil nuclear power program or

nuclear powerplants, it simply has no

peaceful reason to attempt to secure

uranium.

In addition, the Iraqi Government

has attempted to procure tens of thousands

of high-strength aluminum tubes

that could be used in centrifuges designed

to enrich uranium to produce

the fissile material necessary for a nuclear

bomb.

How soon could Iraq acquire nuclear

weapons? The International Institute

for Strategic Studies estimates that

Iraq is probably years away from producing

nuclear weapons if it has to rely

on indigenously produced material. It

points out if Iraq were to acquire nuclear

material from a foreign source,

the timeframe could be reduced to a

matter of months.

This is the scenario the institute

calls the nuclear wild card. An independent

assessment conducted by Professor

Anthony Cordesman of the Center

for Strategic and International

Studies, confirms the growing threat

posed by Iraq. The professor states that

Saddam Hussein seeks weapons to offset

American superiority and high-tech

weaponry. In other words, while the

United States has developed conventional

weapons to be as surgical as possible

and to limit unintended casualties,

Iraq develops its weapons to be as

blunt and as destructive as possible, to

instill fear in its enemies and its neighbors.

In short, Saddam Hussein has continued

to develop a stockpile of the deadliest

chemical and biological agents

known to mankind and has continued

to seek nuclear weapons in defiance of

his international obligations.

The more difficult question is whether

the growing and serious threat posed

by Saddam Hussein is sufficiently imminent

to warrant the authorization of

a military strike by the United States

and its allies should diplomatic means

of disarming Iraq fail.

The President correctly noted in his

recent speech that the passage of this

authorization does not mean that war

is imminent and unavoidable. In fact,

the resolution before us represents a

considerable improvement over the administration’s

earlier draft which I

would have opposed because of its insufficient

emphasis on pursuing diplomatic

means first and working through

the United Nations Security Council.

The bipartisan resolution, by contrast,

specifically requires a Presidential

determination that further reliance

on diplomatic or other peaceful

means alone would not adequately protect

our national security or lead to

the enforcement of the relevant U.N.

resolutions. But nevertheless, the difficult

question remains of whether the

threat is so urgent that a military

strike may be required and should be

authorized by this resolution.

The evidence of Saddam’s massive

buildup of the most dangerous weapons

is compelling, but as Mr. Berger pointed

out in his testimony before the Senate

Armed Services Committee, the

threat is not defined by capability

alone. We have to probe Saddam Hussein’s

intentions, as well as his capability,

to determine the threat. In that

regard, if, as Shakespeare tells us, the

past is prolog, the history of Saddam’s

regime gives us great cause for concern.

While none of us can predict for certain

whether or when Saddam would

strike, there are simply far too many

warning signs in his past behavior and

in his present undertakings. His coldblooded

willingness to use chemical

weapons against his own people, as well

as his enemies; his aggressive invasion

of two nations; his blatant defiance of

international sanctions; his continued

efforts to procure the materials to

build a nuclear bomb; and his determined

progress to develop a more effective

means of delivering chemical and

biological weapons all strongly suggest

an intention and an ability to use these

weapons.

As the assessment of the British Government

states, the evidence shows

that Saddam Hussein does not regard

these weapons of mass destruction as

only weapons of last resort. He is ready

to use them and determined to retain

them. In fact, British intelligence reports

that some of the weapons are

deployable within 45 minutes of an

order to use them.

The history of Saddam Hussein’s rule

over Iraq is a history of war and aggression

against his enemies, his neighbors,

and his own people. Throughout

the decade of the 1980s, Saddam Hussein

used chemical weapons to kill

thousands of civilians, and Iraq has the

means, through billions of dollars in oil

revenues, to continue to develop, procure,

or steal the materials necessary

for its weapons.

The risks are simply too catastrophic

for the world to allow Iraq to continue

on its present course, but is a military

response the only answer?

From the beginning of this debate, I

have emphasized my belief that military

force must be the last resort, not

the first alternative. Today I still hold

out the hope that military action will

not prove necessary to disarm this dangerous

regime. A strong United Nations

resolution to compel Iraq to declare

its weapons and to accept unfettered,

rigorous inspections may well be

successful in convincing Saddam that

he must disarm.

I believe our policy should be focused

on disarming Iraq rather than on regime

change, much as I would like Saddam

Hussein to be deposed.

In making what has been a very difficult

decision, I was persuaded ultimately

to support this resolution by an

extensive discussion with Secretary

Powell. He has convinced me the process

for effective action by the United

Nations to disarm Iraq depends on the

credible threat of the use of force, and

that is the reason ultimately that I

will decide to cast my vote in favor of

this resolution.

Secretary Powell told me his ability

to secure a strong resolution from the

U.N. Security Council will be strengthened

enormously by a strong, bipartisan

congressional vote for this authorization.

Similarly, as Secretary Schlesinger

testified, the greater degree to which

the President and the Congress are

united in purpose with respect to Iraq,

the greater is the likelihood the United

Nations will take a firm and appropriate

stand toward Iraq.

Only if Saddam understands we are

prepared to use military force will a

peaceful means of disarming him have

any chance to succeed. All Americans

share the goal of eliminating this

threat without war, but we differ on

how to achieve that goal.

In my view, there are times in dealing

with a tyrant when the best, indeed

perhaps the only, chance to avoid war

is to express, in unmistakable terms,

our willingness to wage it. And this is

one of those times.

Some understandably ask: Why now?

Has not our current policy contained

Saddam?

It has, only if allowing him to acquire

the capability to kill and destroy

on a scale that far exceeds his past efforts

means that we have contained

him. No, the truth is we have not really

contained Saddam. We have largely

ignored him, a strategy that simply

delays the inevitable while the stakes

grow ever higher.

The reason we must deal with this

threat now is both clear, convincing,

and chilling. Given Saddam’s insatiable

desire to possess chemical, biological,

and nuclear weapons, this danger

will not disappear on its own, and the

price we may have to pay today to

eliminate this threat will prove modest

compared to the price we will have to

pay tomorrow.

As difficult as the decision to authorize

military action is, one need only

consider how much more difficult it

will be when Saddam has a nuclear

bomb.

Finally, let me emphasize my strong

belief that the United States should

act in concert with our allies, as we

pursue a new Security Council resolution,

or in the event we have to resort

to military force. While the United

States must always retain the right to

defend itself, our prospects for dealing

effectively with the Iraqi threat, our

standing in the community of nations,

and our ability to continue to wage an

effective global effort against terrorism

depend on our forging a multilateral

coalition.

The President deserves great credit

for putting together a coalition of

some 90 nations to combat terrorism.

That same kind of effort must be devoted

to building a coalition to confront

and disarm the Iraqi regime.