Mr. President, I am

here to speak in support of the resolution

before us, which I cosponsored. I

believe we must vote for this resolution

not because we want war, but because

the national security of our

country requires action. The prospect

of using force to protect our security is

the most difficult decision a Nation

must ever make.

We all agree that this is not an easy

decision. It carries many risks. If force

proves necessary, it will also carry

costs, certainly in resources, and perhaps

in lives. After careful consideration,

I believe that the risks of inaction

are far greater than the risks of

action.

Saddam Hussein’s regime represents

a grave threat to America and our allies,

including our vital ally, Israel.

For more than two decades, Saddam

Hussein has sought weapons of mass

destruction through every available

means. We know that he has chemical

and biological weapons. He has already

used them against his neighbors and

his own people, and is trying to build

more. We know that he is doing everything

he can to build nuclear weapons,

and we know that each day he gets

closer to achieving that goal.

Iraq has continued to seek nuclear

weapons and develop its arsenal in defiance

of the collective will of the international

community, as expressed

through the United Nations Security

Council. It is violating the terms of the

1991 cease-fire that ended the Gulf war

and as many as 16 Security Council resolutions,

including 11 resolutions concerning

Iraq’s efforts to develop weapons

of mass destruction.

By ignoring these resolutions, Saddam

Hussein is undermining the credibility

of the United Nations, openly

violating international law, and making

a mockery of the very idea of collective

action that is so important to

the United States and its allies.

We cannot allow Saddam Hussein to

get nuclear weapons in violation of his

own commitments, our commitments,

and the world’s commitments.

This resolution will send a clear message

to Iraq and the world: America is

united in its determination to eliminate

forever the threat of Iraq’s weapons

of mass destruction.

The United States must do as much

as possible to build a new United Nations

Security Council coalition

against Saddam Hussein.

Although the administration was far

too slow to start this diplomatic process,

squandering valuable time to bring

nations to our side, I support its recent

efforts to forge a new U.N. Security

Council resolution to disarm Iraq.

If inspectors go back into Iraq, they

should do so with parameters that are

air-tight, water-tight, and Saddamtight.

They should be allowed to see

what they want when they want, anytime,

anywhere, without warning, and

without delay.

Yet if the Security Council is prevented

from supporting this new effort,

then the United States must be prepared

to act with as many allies as possible

to address this threat.

We must achieve the central goal of

disarming Iraq. Of course, the best outcome

would be a peaceful resolution of

this issue. No one here wants war. We

all hope that Saddam Hussein meets

his obligations to existing Security

Council Resolutions and agrees to disarm,

but after 11 years of watching

Hussein play shell-games with his

weapons programs, there is little reason

to believe he has any intention to

comply with an even tougher resolution.

We cannot trust Saddam Hussein,

and we would be irresponsible to do so.

That is why we must be prepared to

use force, if necessary, to disarm Saddam

Hussein, and eliminate Iraq’s

weapons of mass destruction once and

for all.

Almost no one disagrees with these

basic facts: that Saddam Hussein is a

tyrant and a menace; that he has weapons

of mass destruction and that he is

doing everything in his power to get

nuclear weapons; that he has supported

terrorists; that he is a grave threat to

the region, to vital allies like Israel,

and to the United States; and that he is

thwarting the will of the international

community and undermining the

United Nations’ credibility.

Yet some question why Congress

should act now to give the President

the authority to act against Saddam

Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction.

I believe we should act now for two

reasons: first, bipartisan congressional

action on a strong, unambiguous resolution,

like the one before us now, will

strengthen America’s hand as we seek

support from the Security Council and

seek to enlist the cooperation of our allies.

If the administration continues its

strong, if belated, diplomacy, backed

by the bipartisan resolve of the Congress,

I believe the United States will

succeed in rallying many allies to our

side.

Second, strong domestic support and

a broad international coalition will

make it less likely that force would

need to be used. Saddam Hussein has

one last chance to adhere to his obligations

and disarm, and his past behavior

shows that the only chance he will

comply is if he is threatened with

force.

Of course, there is no guarantee that

he will comply even if threatened by

force, but we must try.

Others argue that if even our allies

support us, we should not support this

resolution because confronting Iraq

now would undermine the long-term

fight against terrorist groups like al-

Qaida. Yet, I believe that this is not an

either-or choice. Our national security

requires us to do both, and we can.

The resolution before us today is significantly

better than the one the

president initially submitted. It is not

a blank check. It contains several provisions

that I and many of my colleagues

have long argued were required.

First, it gives the administration the

authority to use all necessary means to

eliminate the threat posed by Saddam

Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction.

Second, it calls on the administration

to do as much as possible to forge

a new U.N. Security Council mandate,

understanding that if new Security

Council action proves impossible, the

United States must be prepared to act

with as many allies as will join us.

Third, it requires the administration

to report to Congress on its plans to assist

with Iraq’s transition to democracy

after Saddam Hussein is gone.

It is in America’s national interest to

help build an Iraq at peace with itself

and its neighbors, because a democratic,

tolerant and accountable Iraq

will be a peaceful regional partner.

Such an Iraq could serve as a model for

the entire Arab world.

So far, we have not heard nearly

enough from the administration about

its plans for assisting the Iraqi people

as they rebuild their lives and create a

new, democratic government. The

president has said that the U.S. will

help, but he hasn’t offered any details

about how.

As we have learned in Afghanistan,

this administration’s words are not

enough. This resolution will require

the administration to move beyond its

words and share with Congress, and the

world, its concrete plans for how America

will support a post-Saddam Iraq.

Finally, in taking this action, Congress

must make clear that any actions

against Iraq are part of a broader strategy

to strengthen American security in

the Middle East, and indeed around the

world.

We must do more to support existing

non-proliferation and disarmament

programs that can help prevent access

to the weapons-grade materials that

tyrants like Saddam Hussein want. We

must demand America’s active and

continuous involvement in addressing

the crisis between Israel and the Palestinians,

and promoting democratization

throughout the Arab world. We

must commit to developing a national

strategy for energy security, one that

would reduce our reliance on the Middle

East for such critical resources.

The decision we must make now is

one a nation never seeks. Yet when

confronted with a danger as great as

Saddam Hussein, it is a decision we

must make. America’s security requires

nothing less.