Mr. President, I

have come to the floor to state that,

after much deliberation, I have decided

to vote for the resolution introduced

by Senators LIEBERMAN, WARNER, BAYH

and MCCAIN.

In two prior floor statements, I have

expressed my views. I serve as the senior

Senator from California, representing

35 million people. That is a

formidable task. People have weighed

in by the tens of thousands. If I were

just to cast a representative vote based

on those who have voiced their opinions

with my office—and with no other

factors—I would have to vote against

this resolution. But as a member of the

Intelligence Committee, as someone

who has read and discussed and studied

the history of Iraq, the record of obfuscation

and the terror Saddam Hussein

has sown, one comes to the conclusion

that he remains a consequential

threat.

Although the ties between Saddam

Hussein and al-Qaida are tenuous,

there should be no question that his

entire government is forged and held

together by terror: The terror of secret

police in station wagons on street corners

watching; The terror forged

through assassinations and brutal murders

of anyone who disagrees with him;

And yes even of his own family members.

While the distance between the

United States and Iraq is great, Saddam

Hussein’s ability to use his chemical

and biological weapons against us

is not constrained by geography—it

can be accomplished in a number of different

ways—which is what makes this

threat so real and persuasive. I supported

the Levin amendment, which

authorized use of force pursuant to

U.N. Security Council action, because

it was the strongest resolution supporting

a multilateral effort. I believe

a multilateral effort, through the

United Nations, provides a strong

moral imprimatur and as such is preferable

to America’s taking preemptive

action that could have consequences

tomorrow and years after that—consequences

we cannot imagine or even

begin to understand today.

The original resolution sent to Congress

by the President would have authorized

a broad and sweeping use of

force whenever or wherever he deemed

necessary—literally any place on

earth. It would have authorized the

newly promulgated national security

strategy of unilateral preemptive use

of force in the defense of the nation in

the war on terror. The resolution before

us does not grant such a sweeping

use of force. Rather, the use of force is

confined to Iraq and targeted toward

forcing Iraq to comply with 16 Security

Council resolutions passed in the wake

of the Persian Gulf war in 1991.

Most importantly, I believe the

Lieberman resolution becomes a catalyst

to encourage prompt, forceful and

effective action by the United Nations

to compel this long sought-after and

much-evaded disarmament of weapons

of mass destruction. Disarming Iraq

under Saddam Hussein is necessary and

vital to the safety and security of

America, the Persian Gulf and the Middle

East—let there be no doubt about

this. But the decision to cast this vote

does not come lightly. I continue to

have serious concerns that there are

those in the administration who would

seek to use this authorization for a

unilateral, preemptive attack against

Iraq. I believe this would be a terrible

mistake.

But I am reassured by statements

made by the President in his address to

the United Nations on September 12,

which conveyed a major shift in the administration’s

approach—turning away

from a preemptive strategy and, instead,

engaging and challenging the

U.N. Security Council to compel Iraq’s

disarmament and back this with force.

I deeply believe that it is vital for the

U.N. Security Council to approve a

new, robust resolution requiring full

and unconditional access to search for

and destroy all weapons of mass destruction.

Unfortunately, the Security

Council has not yet taken this action.

Nor do we, at this time, know if they

will.

If one believes Iraq is a real threat,

and I do, and if the United Nations fails

to act, then the only alternative is

military action led by the United

States. Ironically, this authorization of

use of force may well prompt the Security

Council to act. Because if they do

not, the United Nations becomes a

paper tiger unable to enforce its mandates

and unwilling to meet the challenge

of this new day of danger.

For the past 11 years, Saddam Hussein

has prevaricated, manipulated, deceived

and violated every agreement he

has made to disarm. If the past is prologue,

this record means that arms inspections,

alone, will not force disarmament.

The great danger is a nuclear

one. If Saddam Hussein achieves nuclear

capability, the risk increases exponentially

and the balance of power

shifts radically in a deeply menacing

way. As I said on this floor in earlier

remarks, I believe that Saddam Hussein

rules by terror and has squirreled

away stores of biological and chemical

weapons. He has used them on Kurdish

villages and in his invasion of Iran.

Evidence indicates that he is engaged

in developing nuclear weapons. However,

today the best authorities I could

find indicate he does not yet have nuclear

capability. But this is only a

question of time. And we cannot let

Saddam Hussein become a nuclear

power.

And, so, it is my intention to vote

yes on the resolution before us. I do so

with the hope that the United Nations

will rise to the challenge and with the

trust that the administration forge a

coalition rather than go it alone. And I

do so with the fervent prayer that it

will not be necessary to place America’s

fighting forces or innocent civilians

anywhere in harm’s way.