Mr. President, President

Obama will finally make his case to

the American people tomorrow, explaining

why he wants to take military

action against Syria. His explanation

is long overdue.

I think I have a pretty good idea of

what I expect he will say. First, he will

explain that we have compelling evidence

that it was Asad himself who

used long-banned chemical weapons to

murder his own people. This is not seriously

contested. Neither I nor perhaps

I think any of my colleagues here dispute

these sad facts. It has been well

documented by our intelligence

sources. As a member of that committee,

I have had access to those

sources, and I don’t doubt the conclusion

of the President and others that

Asad is responsible for this attack.

The President will also most likely

explain that such a horrendous violation

of international norms deserves a

worldwide response of condemnation.

Who could possibly look at those

standards and those rooms full of dead

children and not agree that the perpetrators

have to face consequences for

their crimes?

The President will also surely discuss

the issue of credibility. He is likely to

maintain, as he did recently in Stockholm,

that it is not his own credibility

at stake, nor even American credibility,

but the credibility of the international

community that will be

harmed by inaction.

I agree with those who say the President’s

credibility and our Nation’s

credibility are linked. They are. However,

with his now notorious and, I believe,

ill-considered ‘‘red line’’ comment,

President Obama has forced us

to debate a military attack in yet another

Middle Eastern country. Unfortunately,

it appears that the purpose of

this military attack first and foremost

is perhaps to defend his own credibility.

I am certain that if the President

had not drawn his red line, we

would not be having this discussion. In

that case, Asad’s use of such weapons

would be roundly condemned as yet another

example of his horrendous brutality,

but we would be no more eager

to engage militarily in his civil war

than we have been as the other 100,000

Syrian people were being slaughtered

by more conventional means.

Make no mistake—it is the credibility

issue that has brought us to this

pass, and the credibility issue is of

President Obama’s own making—his

and his alone.

So tomorrow evening the President

will need to explain to the American

public exactly what will be achieved by

this limited, focused attack, as described

by the administration, beyond

simply a token punishment for a horrendous

crime in defense of his credibility.

The President has said the proposed

limited attack is to be a ‘‘shot

across the bow.’’ His Secretary of

State, Secretary Kerry, has said it is

going to be unbelievably small. We

need to know what the plan is, and will

be, should President Asad be

undeterred by this unbelievably small,

shot-across-the-bow attack. What if he

isn’t? What then? What do we do next?

The President needs to explain that.

We need to know how this escalation

is likely to influence extremist radical

fighters now active in Syria—extremist

radical fighters. There is not a line between

good guys and bad guys here.

There is the infiltration of Al Qaeda,

al-Nusra, and other terrorist organizations

and individuals with those seeking

to overturn Asad. So it is not clear

just how Syria will turn out should

Asad be deposed. I don’t think these extremist

fighters will be overly concerned

with an ‘‘unbelievably small,

shot across the bow’’ response by the

United States.

What will Hezbollah and Hamas and

Al Qaeda affiliate fighters do when this

‘‘show of force’’ is over? What is the

President’s plan of action if the chemical

weapons fall into the hands of

these anti-American jihadists? And

how about the always-threatened spillover

of the Syria conflict into Lebanon

or Turkey or Jordan? Will an attack

intended to slap Asad’s wrist while defending

President Obama’s credibility

make expansion of the conflict more

likely or less likely? Most importantly,

the President needs to explain to the

American people more thoroughly exactly

how America’s national security

and best interests will be served by this

response.

The President, in my opinion, must

also address additional concerns that

are widely—almost universally—shared

by the American people. We all know

that taking America to war without

support from the people is the surest

path to disaster. I suggest this must be

avoided, and the President is going to

have to make his case as to how to

avoid that.

Over this last week I visited with

Hoosiers from across Indiana to gather

their input. Through these visits, as

well as calls and e-mails by the thousands,

the vast majority—shockingly,

the majority of Hoosiers I have heard

from are opposed to U.S. military engagement

in Syria. As all conscientious

lawmakers, I know I have to balance

the views of my constituents with

my own judgment on how best to represent

their interests and the interests

of our country.

In this case, I must first ask myself,

what do the people back home in my

State know that many of the rest of us

here in Washington perhaps do not, or

at least have expressed?

First, the people back home know

that America has been at war in far-off

lands for more than a decade—12 years

on. They have seen long repeated deployments

of their loved ones, and they

have seen the body bags come home.

They are aware of sacrifices that have

been made in the name of protecting

our interests, but they are less aware

of positive results of those sacrifices.

They see Iraq descending again into

conflict as its own citizens continue to

slaughter one another because of different

interpretations of the Koran or

different political motivations or just

pure outright quests for power. They

see a corrupt government there that

authorizes overflights of Russian aircraft

bringing modern weapons to

Syria to fuel a similar conflict.

Hoosiers see an Afghanistan so deeply

corrupt and ungrateful to the United

States that the current regime tries to

extort huge ransom payments simply

to permit us to remove equipment and

personnel from that sorry country.

They do not see meaningful progress

toward a democratic, stable, and humane

government that was to be the

objective of American sacrifice of blood

and treasure. They do not see how our

12 years of effort have contributed to

our own national security interests.

Hoosiers look at the spiraling disaster

in Egypt, where the choices have

been an extremist, deeply anti-American

Islamic radicalism or a brutal and

undemocratic military dictatorship.

both benefiting from billions of American

taxpayer dollars spent on weapons

or lining uniform pockets. In the meantime,

fellow Christians are being killed

in their churches.

Simply put, the people of Indiana do

not see that American policy and action

have attained meaningful results

in the Middle East. Instead, they see a

region of continuing and increasing violence,

chaos, and disintegration. They

are war weary and they are discouraged

after more than a decade of wars

that have not produced the desired outcomes.

What they do not see is an articulate

response. They do not know what our

regional strategy is in the Middle East

because no one is explaining it, much

less pursuing it. They cannot measure

progress because they do not know the

destination. And they cannot evaluate

this latest proposal for a fourth military

engagement in the Middle East because

they cannot see how it contributes

to our own security here at home.

More importantly, they worry that a

focused, limited attack on Syria will

end up being something else entirely

because so little thought has been devoted

to potential unintended consequences.

Yes, they are war weary,

but the American people are also war

wise.

In addition to the above unanswered

questions, for me, one of the most important

questions is how this proposed

limited strike will affect Iran’s perception

of our resolve and our ability to

prevent that country from acquiring

nuclear weapons capability. It is not so

much what we do or how we do it but

how Iran perceives the action we take.

This may be the most significant question

of all because, unlike Syria, Iran

poses threats to our core national security

interests.

Part of the administration’s argument

is that to do nothing would embolden

the Iranian regime as they pursue

their own weapons-of-mass-destruction

programs. But I think we have to

raise the question, is that really so, or

is it, perhaps, the reverse? Will a limited

punitive attack discourage the

mullahs in Iran because of some degree

of destruction—remember, unbelievably

small—or will it actually encourage

the Iranians because there is no

followup option or broader strategic

context informing our policy? If an attack

is ineffective in altering Asad’s

behavior or fortune, will it not actually

encourage Iran in pursuing its own

weapons program? I have not heard the

administration address this question.

Also, will a fourth military engagement

in the Middle East make it harder

to assemble popular and political

support for action should Iran’s behavior

make that necessary? My constant

fear here during the past several years,

as I have been engaged on the Iranian

issue of the pursuit of nuclear weapons,

has been that our country will be too

militarily, politically, and economically

exhausted to confront the real

strategic enemy when our core interests

require it. I fear a Syria attack

will make this problem even more difficult.

To my knowledge, no one has

yet to address this question within the

administration, which President

Obama, like the previous three Presidents,

has declared a nuclear-weaponscapable

Iran to be ‘‘unacceptable.’’

I think this is a critical question we

must have to ask ourselves. For all of

those who are saying: We will change

the perception of Iran to the point

where they will change their behavior

in the pursuit of nuclear weapons by a,

quote, unbelievably small shot across

the bow or a military response that

could lead us into further conflict in

the Middle East—I think this undermines

our credibility. I think the question

has to be asked: Is the reverse

going to happen as a consequence of all

of this?

This is a deeply historic and profound

moment for our Nation. It carries an

importance that goes well beyond

Syria or even the Middle East. This debate

carries important consequences

for the relationship between the executive

and legislative branches of our

government.

To refuse the Commander in Chief

war-making authorities when he has

asked for them is not a decision any of

us can take lightly.

We must all balance the views of the

people we represent—even when they

have been nearly unanimous—with

other elements, such as the abstract,

unknowable geostrategic factors that

could carry profound consequences not

just for this year or next year, for this

generation, but for many generations;

and such as the compelling moral arguments

that resonate with special

strength in our unique Nation guided

from birth by moral principles; and

now even the constitutional challenges

that could affect the delicate balance

we have maintained for two centuries.

I will weigh all I have said before I

announce how I intend to vote on the

resolution before us. I will defer to the

President’s request to address the Nation.

In my opinion, consequential actions

proposed by the President need to

be clarified and numerous questions

need to be answered before we grant

the authority to the President to engage

America in yet another Middle

East conflict.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest

the absence of a quorum.