Mr. President, I would

like to thank the chairman for his

comments for a historical analysis of

what has occurred and his comments

regarding our ability to work together.

I do wish to reiterate a point that the

chairman made partially through his

comments. I do not think any of us

know at this time whether the offers

that today have been made from Russia

and responses that have been given

from Syria, I do not think we have any

idea whether there is credibility at

present.

What I do know is there would be absolutely

zero conversation about that

had our committee not passed an authorization

out on a 10-to-7 vote and if

we were not taking this up this week.

So I wish to commend the chairman for

his leadership on this issue. I have enjoyed

working with him. I have enjoyed

working with him on all the issues relative

to Syria and all the other things

we have done in a bipartisan way.

I think it has been the tradition—I

know it has been the tradition of this

body, when it comes to issues beyond

our shorelines, to set aside partisanship,

as was mentioned a moment ago,

and do things that are in the best interests

of our Nation. There is nothing

more important that each Member of

this body will take up than the authorization

for the use of military force. I

sensed it the other day in our committee.

I have sensed it with those

whom I have talked to since. Each

Member is looking at this with a sense

of humility and soberness. I truly believe

it is up to each Member to make

this decision.

I will say the issues of Syria are

something I am familiar with. I have

traveled to the region, as I know the

chairman and many others have. I have

traveled three times this year. I wrote

an op-ed in the New York Times in

April regarding what our response to

Syria should be. Our committee thankfully

passed, on a 15-to-3 vote on May

21, with the chairman’s leadership, the

Syria Transition Support Act.

This was to support the vetted moderate

opposition and require the administration

to develop a comprehensive

strategy. I know Members of this

body know I support this authorization.

I helped write it with the chairman.

I am very comfortable with my

position in supporting this and believe

what we have done with this authorization

we have done in the right and correct

way.

I will say I have been very dismayed

at the administration’s lack of response

after stating publicly that they

were going to support the vetted moderate

opposition in certain ways. I have

been very frustrated at the response

and the lack of support in that way. As

I mentioned, I was just in the area 3

weeks ago. I visited the same refugee

camp in Turkey on the Syrian border

and in Jordan on the Syrian border. I

saw some of the same refugees whom I

saw there less than 1 year ago.

Candidly, I am dismayed we have not

supported the vetted opposition in a

better way. I know we have urged out

of our committee that we have a much

more comprehensive strategy. I wish

that bill had come to the floor. I wish

the Senate had taken action. But, candidly,

I also am dismayed this administration

has not taken action to do

something in a more comprehensive

way.

No question the introduction of

chemical weapons has changed the dynamic

tremendously. I think the chairman

was very articulate in explaining

why this is important. I wish to say to

everybody in this body, to me an equally

important issue for our Nation is the

credibility of the United States of

America. I believe our President,

whether you support him, whether you

like him, I believe the President spoke

for our Nation when he established a

red line some months ago regarding the

use of chemical weapons.

I believe it is very important for our

Nation’s credibility in the region and

in the world that we have an appropriate

response when we have a dictator

such as Asad take the actions he

has taken against international norms

the way he has but especially when the

Commander in Chief of our Nation has

spoken the way he has about this issue.

To me this is twofold. Certainly, it is

about the international norms that

have been spoken to eloquently by

many, but to me it is also an issue of

this Nation’s credibility of the response

as people are looking on to what

we are going to do.

That is why I support this authorization.

I do wish to go back over a couple

points the chairman referred to relative

to the substance of the authorization.

I think most people know the

White House sent over an authorization

that to me was very broad. It did

not define what we were going to do in

a specific way.

I know the chairman just talked

about the fact that this authorization

is tailored. It is specific. Let me go

over again specifically what this authorization

does. It is specific purposes

only: to respond to the use of weapons

of mass destruction to dissuade future

use, degrade ability, and to prevent

transfer, no boots on the ground for

combat operations.

I know there have been some discussions

about that in our committee.

Very emphatically, this authorization

eliminates and keeps any boots on the

ground for combat operations from occurring.

This has a time limit of 60 days with

a 30-day extension which Congress can

disapprove. It is geographically limited

to Syria only, which the original authorization

was not. It is against legitimate

military targets only, which

again the original authorization was

not.

There are a series of determinations

the President has to make prior to taking

action with this authorization, including

that it is in the core national

interests of the United States and that

he has a military plan to achieve the

objectives.

In addition, this authorization requires

a comprehensive strategy for a

negotiated end to this conflict.

I wish to refer to something else the

chairman mentioned; that is, the type

of activity. I know there have been a

number of editorial comments in papers

and publications around the country

referring to this as a pinprick.

There have been other concerns by

Members of this body as to the duration

of this effort, as to how long it

will be.

I have had the privilege, because of

the position I serve in on the Foreign

Relations Committee, to be involved in

multiple phone calls and personal

meetings. There was one last night

that lasted at great length with the

President and Vice President.

I wish to say to every person in this

body, I have no belief whatsoever that

if military action is taken, it is going

to be a pinprick—none. The American

military has incredible ability to deal

with issues in a forceful way but also

do so in a very short timeframe.

I do believe, based on the many meetings

we have had, both with military

and civilian leadership, that to characterize

what is proposed as a pinprick or

to characterize what is proposed as inserting

ourselves into a long-term civil

war, I think both of those characterizations

are wrong.

Obviously, one of the dilemmas people

here deal with is that we write policy

and then it is up to the administration

to carry that out—and no question,

none of us will be involved in the

direct carrying out. But it is my firm

belief that there is not a thread of

thinking by the administration that

what they are considering is a pinprick.

On the other hand, I have not a

thread of thought that they are also

considering doing something that is

going to involve us in a long-term civil

war. Obviously, conflicts such as this

are complex.

In closing, let me say this. Each Senator

has to make their own decision.

This is one of those things where lobbying

is not something that is going to

make up the minds of Senators. I think

each Senator has to make up their own

hearts and minds.

What I can say is we are going to

have an open process. I know we have

talked about the process going forward.

I hope Senators will keep their amendments

germane. I hope we have a sober

debate about an issue that is the most

important type of decision any Senator

will make.

I am thrilled the President decided to

come to Congress for an authorization.

I know a lot of people have made many

comments regarding this. Candidly, I

am pleased the President has come to

us for a debate. It is my hope the Senate,

after hearing the facts and after

having a thoughtful debate, will approve

the authorization for the use of

military force.

I couldn’t agree more with the chairman

that if people wish to see a diplomatic

solution—which is the only way

we are going to end this conflict—I do

not think this conflict ends militarily.

I believe we have learned a lot from the

last two episodes we have been

through.

I believe it is important for us to

have this authorization because I believe

it is the only thing at this point,

the fact that we passed it out of committee,

the fact that it is on the floor,

that might possibly lead to a diplomatic

settlement.

I also believe it is time for the President

to lead. I know there have been a

lot of statements over the last week,

and the President had multiple audiences

in which to speak. I understand

this, and I understand reports out of

these meetings can come in many ways

not to be accurate.

The President is coming to the Hill

tomorrow. He will be making a major

speech to the United States, the citizens

of our country, tomorrow night. I

know many of them have lives, where

all of them, most of them, get up in the

mornings, go to work, they raise their

families, and they haven’t had the opportunity

to spend as much time on

these issues. That is why we are elected

to do this.

I will say this. It is very important

for the President of the United States

to come to Congress and for the President

of the United States to make his

case to the American people.

He is asking for this authorization. I

believe it is important for us to give

him this authorization.

Again, I wish to thank the chairman

for working with us to make sure we

have narrowed this authorization in

such a way that I think it meets the

test of what the American people and

what all of us wish to see happen. But

I do believe now it is up to the President,

over the next several days and

this week, to make his case to the

American people as to why the Senate

should give him this authorization for

the use of military force, which I hope

we will do.

I thank you for the time, and I yield

the floor.