I thank my good

friend.

Mr. President, I have come to discuss,

not unexpectedly, the situation in

Iraq and what our country ought to do

in response to that threat.

As has happened many times before

when faced with a potential threat to

our national security and to the security

of our allies, we must carefully

evaluate that threat, and decide how

best to deal with it.

It is imperative we not make a rash

decision that will have lasting consequences

for generations to come.

I am very disturbed by President

Bush’s determination that the threat

from Iraq is so severe and so immediate

that we must rush to a military solution.

I do not see it that way.

I have been briefed several times by

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, CIA Director

Tenet, and other top administration

officials. I have discussed this

issue with the President. I have heard

nothing—nothing—that convinces me

that an immediate preemptive military

strike is necessary or that it would further

our interests in the long term.

Saddam Hussein’s desire to acquire

weapons of mass destruction is of grave

concern. Based on the information that

has been provided to me by this administration,

I believe this threat is best

dealt with in the context of the United

Nations.

The U.N. must move aggressively to

ensure unfettered inspections and bolster

its efforts to stop the proliferation

of materials that can be used in the

production of weapons of mass destruction.

I urge the U.N. Security Council to

take immediate and strong action to

deal with Iraq and its infractions.

Should Iraq fail to comply with the

United Nations resolutions, it is incumbent

on the United States to aggressively

work with member nations

to develop a means to bring Iraq into

compliance.

But at this time, I cannot in good

conscience authorize any use of military

force against Iraq other than in

the context of a U.N. Security Council

effort.

If we receive information that the

threat is more imminent, or if the

United Nations’ effort fails, then the

President should come back to Congress

for consideration of the next step.

Providing the President with authorization

at this time for unilateral U.S.

military action would undercut U.N.

Security Council efforts to disarm Iraq.

We must ensure that any action we

take against Iraq does not come at the

expense of the health and strength of

our Nation, or the stability of the

international order upon which our

economic security depends.

I spoke at length on the Senate floor

last week about pressing problems that

will determine the future strength of

our Nation:

Grossly inadequate funding for education,

declining access to affordable

health care, degradation of our environment,

and erosion of pension security

for many hard-working Americans.

Saddam Hussein is as bad a dictator

as they come. His past actions speak

volumes about his true intentions. But

is the only solution to this dilemma a

military solution? Experience tells us

otherwise. Ten years of containment

through enforcement of two no-fly

zones and U.N. economic sanctions

have prevented Saddam Hussein from

rebuilding his military to any significant

extent especially with respect to

our security. His military strength remains

significantly weaker than when

he moved against Kuwait more than a

decade ago.

There is much speculation about his

weapons of mass destruction program,

but no evidence that he has developed

a nuclear capability, and less that he

could deliver it. While there is talk of

cooperation between Iraq and al-Qaida,

and I don’t doubt that there has been

some cooperation, I have not seen any

hard evidence of close cooperation.

There is, however, a great deal of evidence

of Saddam’s paranoia and his distrust

of all but his closest inner circle.

He has wiped out any viable political

opposition and tightly holds all the

reins of control. Even if he were to develop

a nuclear capability, which he

does not have, I have a hard time believing

that Saddam Hussein would

turn these weapons over to any organization,

particularly a terrorist organization,

after he has paid so dearly to

acquire them.

Our greatest problem, it seems to me,

is that we have very little good intelligence

on what is going on inside Iraq.

We know that Saddam Hussein’s intentions

are bad, but we don’t have a clear

picture of what his capabilities actually

are, or if a threat exists. Clearly,

we need to get United Nations inspectors

on the ground immediately. The

inspectors must have unfettered access

to all suspected sites in Iraq. This is

proving to be a major challenge for the

United Nations, but the United Nations

is much more likely to succeed if the

United States is squarely behind its efforts,

and not standing off to the side,

secretly hoping that it will fail.

We should give the United Nations

the opportunity to step forward and

deal with Iraq and its infractions. In

my estimation, the United States

stands to gain much more if we can

work with the United Nations to deliver

a multilateral approach to disarming

Iraq, even providing military

force, if necessary. If the United Nations

fails to press for the disarmament

of Iraq or is blocked in its efforts, then

I would expect the President to come

back to Congress for further discussion

of the alternatives.

In view of this threat from Saddam

Hussein, which I believe is missing, I

urge the Congress not to adjourn sine

die upon completion of its work this

fall, but to be ready to return to session

at any time prior to the New Year

if further action against Saddam Hussein

should become necessary.

We must also work with the United

Nations to stop the flow of those materials

needed for producing weapons of

mass destruction. There is a great deal

more that we could do to tighten international

nonproliferation regimes.

Rather than supporting and empowering

international efforts to stop the

flow of nuclear materials and force

greater transparency in chemical and

biological commercial production facilities,

the Bush administration has

undercut these efforts and refused to

participate in attempts to strengthen

existing nonproliferation regimes. For

example, last fall, at the Biological

Weapons Convention review conference,

the Bush administration scuttled

efforts by our closest allies, most

notably Great Britain, to strengthen

the international biological weapons

inspection regime.

The administration has actively undermined

efforts to monitor and verify

the existing international moratorium

on nuclear weapons testing.

Additionally, we should be putting

more resources into the Nunn-Lugar

program, which has had some success

at preventing the export from the

former Soviet Union of nuclear weapons

materials and scientific know-how.

Saddam Hussein is not the only deranged

dictator who is willing to deprive

his people in order to acquire

weapons of mass destruction.

Just think of what progress we could

make on nonproliferation if we were to

put one fraction of the cost of a war

against Saddam Hussein into efforts to

prevent the emergence of the next nuclear,

chemical, or biological threat.

Strong efforts at strengthening international

nonproliferation regimes

would truly enhance our Nation’s future

security.

In our preoccupation with Saddam

Hussein, we must not lose sight of potential

crises in several other areas of

the world. The India-Pakistan nuclear

confrontation and the standoff over

Kashmir have demanded a great deal of

American effort during the past year.

We cannot rule out a re-emergence of

this nuclear threat. The conflict between

Israel and the Palestinians continues

to claim lives and threaten the

stability of the region. Without U.S.

prodding and even direct involvement,

there is little chance that a peace process

could resume there. War with Iraq

could have an inflammatory effect

upon that situation, and potentially

risk the security of Israel as well. A

war with Iraq would diminish our focus

on bringing stability to Afghanistan,

risking a return of anarchy to an area

we have just given American lives to

stabilize. While Pakistan has stood

with us this year, a lessening of U.S.

attention to Afghanistan could significantly

undercut our influence in

Islamabad. And the larger war on terrorism,

our top concern just a few

months ago, would take a back seat to

a protracted war with Iraq and a major

reconstruction effort. Yes, we must

worry about Saddam. But we must not

do so in a manner that reduces our

ability to deal with these other

threats.

I fear that this administration is,

perhaps unwittingly, heading us into a

miserable cycle of waging wars that

isolate our Nation internationally and

stir up greater hatred of America. This

cycle will generate more enemies,

while undercutting our support from a

broad coalition of allies—coalitions

that have proven to be the hallmark of

all successful peacemaking efforts in

recent years.

We owe it to the American people not

to rush into a war, but to work with

the institutions that we fought so hard

to develop for just this eventuality. If

multilateral efforts fail, then the

President should come back to Congress

for consideration of the next

course of action. I cannot support a

resolution that puts this Nation on a

path to war without first exhausting

diplomatic efforts. Now is the time to

put the international system to work

for us, and consider unilateral military

action only as a last resort.

I yield the floor.