

Those are the words of retired MG Vernon Chong, U.S. Air Force.

I think it brings to mind the very important facts that face us today. We are at war. The war is real. The threats to our country and to our freedom are real. We must come together as a nation and recognize this threat, or we stand to lose the very principles, the very freedom, we each cherish so much.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is now closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1042, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1042) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2006 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Graham amendment No. 2515, relating to the review of the status of detainees of the United States Government.

Warner/Frist amendment No. 2518, to clarify and recommend changes to the policy of the United States on Iraq and to require reports on certain matters relating to Iraq.

Levin amendment No. 2519, to clarify and recommend changes to the policy of the United States on Iraq and to require reports on certain matters relating to Iraq.

Bingaman amendment No. 2523 (to amendment No. 2515), to provide for judicial review of detention of enemy combatants.

Graham amendment No. 2524 (to amendment No. 2515), in the nature of a substitute.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There will be 30 minutes for debate equally divided between the bill's managers.

The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, first, I advise the Senate that last night for a period of 2 hours we had a very thorough debate on amendments of my distinguished colleague from Michigan and amendments that I put in with our distinguished leader, Mr. FRIST, and I believe cosponsors of Senator LEVIN, and we were joined by another colleague, Senator LIEBERMAN. Of course, Senators don't have access to that RECORD yet. But I assure you the merits of both cases were thoroughly stated.

As we have 30 minutes divided between the two of us this morning, my distinguished friend and I talked this morning, and he expressed an interest in having his amendment voted first. As a matter of comity and courtesy, we offer that to the Senator from Michigan. If that is his desire, I ask unani-

mous consent that be the order in which votes be taken.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, that would be acceptable, indeed, and I think preferable from every perspective. It is our understanding there is a suggestion to that effect from the Republican side. Whether it is from the Republican side or our side, I think it is wise. I accept the suggestion and do so with thanks to my good friend from Virginia.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, to inform the Senate, there are two amendments. Basically, as we will explain momentarily, the amendments are almost identical except in three areas. They are important areas, and we will go into that in some detail here in a moment.

The Levin amendment will go first, and ours will go second. There will be votes on both amendments.

We had the option to draw up an entirely different amendment, to go into many ramifications and many issues that we feel very strongly about on this side of the aisle. I take the responsibility. Or if anyone wishes to share it with me, they may well do so. I felt that it is so critical at this point in history with regard to the United States policy towards Iraq, together with our coalition forces, that the extent to which the Senate could speak with one voice had great merit. Therefore, essentially on this side we looked at the amendment of the Senator from Michigan and made, in my judgment, several minor modifications and one very significant modification. That is the standing.

As Senators vote, they will note the similarity between these amendments. But I felt the Senator from Michigan and I have a very strong feeling that the basic purpose of these amendments—whichever one is voted and survives—is to send the strongest possible message to the Iraqi people, the new government that will be formed subsequent to December 15, that our country, together with our coalition partners, has made enormous efforts, enormous sacrifice of life and limb, contributions by the people not only from our country but a number of other countries, to let them establish for themselves a form of democracy.

I believe we have made great progress with several transitional governments, a referendum vote, and now on the verge of what I perceive—and I think the Senator from Michigan shares the view—of an even stronger and larger vote to elect the permanent government.

The next 120 days, in my judgment, are critical—absolutely critical. Every word that comes from the Congress of the United States will be carefully scrutinized not only by the Iraqi people but by the nations throughout the Mid-

dle East and indeed our coalition partners. We have to be extremely careful in the formulation of those words and messages so they are not misconstrued.

I feel, with all due respect to the amendment originally drawn by my colleague from Michigan and others, that the last paragraph phrases a timetable of withdrawal requiring the President to file a report every 90 days giving specific dates and other factors.

That is the major change between these two amendments. The amendment of the Senator from Virginia strikes that last paragraph. I will go into further detail momentarily as to exactly why. We made the effort to have a bipartisan amendment. It is forward-looking.

Again, it is my intention to have the amendment on this side of the aisle not contain any language that could be misconstrued as a timetable which could establish and set up a fragile situation, particularly on the eve of another election on December 15.

I thank my distinguished colleague from Michigan. I commend him for much of the language he included in the amendment. I was privileged to draw on it. However, it sends that message on which we have absolute unity to the Iraqi people: We mean business. We have done our share. Now the challenge is up to you.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. I yield myself 1 minute, and then I will yield to Senator KENNEDY.

I thank the Senator from Virginia for his words. There is no timetable for withdrawal in the last paragraph. I, like him, urge Members to read that paragraph. It simply says that the same type of schedule which we all agreed to in paragraph 6 should also be proposed with an estimated schedule relative to phased withdrawal if—if—the conditions which we all agree upon should be set forth in the report have been achieved.

That is what it does. That is an important message. It is not a withdrawal timetable in paragraph 7, but each Member will reach their own conclusion on that. It sends an important message, but it is not the one the Senator from Virginia has characterized.

I yield 5 minutes to the Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for his strong leadership.

I strongly support the Levin-Biden-Reid amendment on Iraq. Our amendment expresses the clear sense of the Senate that the U.S. military forces should not stay in Iraq indefinitely. Although many disagree with the President about the war, we all honor the service and sacrifice and heroism of our brave men and women in Iraq. Our Armed Forces are serving courageously in Iraq, under enormously difficult circumstances. The policy of our Government must be worthy of their sacrifice. Unfortunately, it is not. The American people know it.