

The resolution itself doesn't contain an alternative except the following: "The primary objective of the United States"—I am really listening at this point—"strategy in Iraq"—I am looking for a verb here but instead here are the four words—"should be to have the Iraqi political leaders make the political compromises necessary to end violence in Iraq."

"Should be to have" them. Well, if I had a magic wand, maybe I could make this happen. But the reality is that it is not the lack of political compromise, it is the lack of peace that is enabling them to make the political compromise. As long as the Mahdi army is controlling Sadr City and Sadr is confronting al-Maliki and fomenting violence—Shiite and Sunni and vice versa—the political compromises are going to be impossible to make. That is why the President and al-Maliki understood you have to first create peaceful conditions, change the conditions on the ground. If the Mahdi army is going to have death squads foment this kind of violence, you will never have those political compromises. If al-Maliki can control Sadr and eliminate the threat, political compromise is possible. So there is no alternative to the President's strategy in the nonbinding resolution that was filed.

Secondly, it would be dangerous. To pass a nonbinding resolution in the United States is for effect. What is the effect? Well, the effect theoretically is to try to get the President to change policy. This strategy isn't going to change in the near term. Troops are on the way. Al-Maliki made his commitment and is apparently making good on the commitment, so the new strategy is working out right now. So a non-binding resolution passed in a week or two is not going to change this. Instead, its effect is a pernicious one. What kind of a message does it send, first of all, to our troops that Congress doesn't support what the President and they are trying to accomplish here; that the Congress thinks we should be going in some other direction, albeit there is no alternative being presented, just in a resolution of criticism? What kind of a message does it send to the allies that the President's policy is going to be undercut to the point that it will not be carried out, and therefore they better begin to hedge their bets? And most important, what message does it send to our enemies? Can they simply decide that in a matter of time, support for the President's policies will have diminished to the point that they won't have to concern themselves with this new strategy anymore if they can wait it out, and they will have an opportunity for success? So it is not going to work, No. 1, and secondly, it is dangerous.

That brings me to the third and final point. It seems to me that those people in favor of sending a message without presenting an alternative have an obligation to consider what will occur if the President's policy doesn't succeed.

Almost everybody recognizes that the Iraqi Army is not able to defend this country and create a peaceful stability in the country at this point.

So the question is: What would happen if we leave Iraq a failed state? Most agree, and the intelligence community has recently testified, that it would be disastrous, not only for the people in Iraq but for our allies in the region and for our long-term national security interests, both because of the ability of al-Qaida and other terrorists to consolidate their gains in the area and use that as a place from which to operate, and secondly, because all of the momentum we have gained in getting support, more or less, from countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan—all of the countries in the region—that have helped in the war against the terrorists will switch the other way as they realize America will not stay in the fight, that they have to begin hedging their bets with the other powers in the region which include the sectarian killers and the terrorists.

What is the consequence of a failed Iraq? It seems to me that for those who present no alternative other than Iraq needs to get its act together and provide for its own security, a policy which I don't know of anyone who agrees would succeed at this point in time, if that is not going to succeed, then what is the consequence of a failed Iraq and what is the consequence of the President's strategy failing?

It all gets back to what I said in the beginning, and that is, it seems to me all Americans should want this strategy to succeed. Why would anyone want the strategy to fail? Just to prove a political point? That doesn't make sense when we have young men and women in harm's way and a lot riding on it not just for Iraqis but also for our national security. We should all want this strategy to work. We should do everything in our power to help make it work, and that begins by giving the plan a chance and not criticizing it before the strategy even has a few days to work out. That is why the possibility of a resolution, which is highly critical of the President's strategy and suggests a different course of action, a timeline for leaving, is the wrong strategy.

What is that alternative in terms of timeline? It simply reads as follows:

The United States should transfer under an appropriately expedited time line responsibility for internal security and halting sectarian violence in Iraq to the Government of Iraq and Government security forces.

That is the alternative, in an appropriately expedited timeline. That is no alternative at all. That doesn't direct anybody to provide for security in Iraq on any faster basis than we are already attempting. I have heard no one criticize our training of the Iraqi forces or finding or suggesting there is some other way to train them in a better way, in a faster way. It takes time. We are doing the best we can.

The general who was in charge of creating that program, General Petraeus, will be our general in charge again. I think, by all accounts, he did a terrific job of setting up the program. We know it takes a certain amount of time to train these Iraqi forces. We know the country is not in a position to defend itself at this point. Why would we want to set ourselves on a course to leave when we know they cannot defend themselves?

The truth is, for the time being, we are going to have to remain there to help secure the peace in Iraq, and that means we ought to give the President's policy a chance to succeed, and all of us hope it will succeed.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

#### IRAQ

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, my distinguished colleague from Arizona is speaking about a very important issue and one that we certainly will have a discussion about and a debate about in this Congress in the coming days, and that is as it should be. We are a democracy with divided branches of Government, separation of powers. We have a President, a legislative branch, a judicial branch, and there is a role here for the legislative branch.

My colleague suggested this was a circumstance where some were simply willing to criticize the President but offer no plan of their own. Then he subsequently said the resolution that some of my colleagues will offer in the Senate will advocate a different course of action. That is a plan, I guess, isn't it? If one advocates a different course of action than the President is advocating, it seems to me that is a plan.

I don't disagree with much of what those who have a different view would say about these issues. Most of us want peace in Iraq. We want the Iraqis to control their own destiny. We want the Iraqi troops to be sufficiently trained so they can provide their own security. We all share that goal. We all want our country to succeed in the missions.

Let me make one very important point. My colleague alluded to it in a way different than I would respond to it. During the debate on the floor of the Senate I don't think there will be a single Senator who stands up and in any way says he wants us to withdraw support for American troops. Speaking for myself—and I think for most other Senators, perhaps every other Senator—I think Members who serve in this Congress believe it is critically important to support our troops. When we send men and women in our uniform to go to war, we are obligated, it seems to me, to do everything to support them in their mission.

So this debate is not about whether we will support those troops whom we have asked to go to war in behalf of our country; we certainly will do that. The debate will be about the President's

plan for a surge in troops or a deepening involvement in Iraq. It is a worthy debate for us to have because I think this is obviously a conflict that has gone on a long while, longer now than the Second World War. We have had a lot of discussion with the military leaders in the field about training Iraqi troops to provide for their own security.

Let's review what has happened in Iraq.

Saddam Hussein ran Iraq. We now know he was a butcher. We knew it then; we know it now. There are hundreds of thousands of skeletons in mass graves, of the victims murdered by Saddam Hussein. But Saddam Hussein doesn't exist anymore. He was executed. He has been buried.

There is a new constitution in Iraq, voted for by the Iraqi people. There is a new government in Iraq selected by the Iraqi people. This country belongs to Iraq, not to us. It is their country, not ours. The security for their country is their responsibility, not ours. The question for all of us is: When will the Iraqi people decide they are able to provide for their own security?

My colleague says it is a matter of being patient with training the Iraqi troops. Perhaps today there is going to be a young man or woman who is going to enlist in the Marines and the Army and they will go to training. It won't be very many months before they are fully trained and maybe committed to the battlefield—6 months, 7 months, 8 months. The question is: How long does it take to train an Iraqi army and Iraqi security forces to provide security for their own country? Years? Can they be trained, as American troops are trained, in months rather than years? The answer, at least in the last several years, seems to have been no.

It is very important for us to debate this question of our deepening involvement in Iraq. We all know what is going on there. It is sectarian violence, Shia on Sunni, Sunni on Shia. Seventy-five more people were killed today in Shia neighborhoods, multiple bombings, we are told by the news today, 160 wounded. The day before, dozens of Iraqis were killed, and 25 American troops were killed in numerous attacks. Our hearts break for all of them, particularly the American troops, but also for everyone who is losing their life in this conflict.

Suicide car bombers, simultaneous car bombings, beheaded bodies floating in the Tigris River, bodies with holes drilled in the heads and knees with electric drills, tortured, tortured bodies swinging from lampposts in Iraq, we read. It is a cycle of grim violence, unlike any most of us have ever seen. It is unbelievable.

Let me tell you what General Abizaid, who is in charge of CENTCOM, said about 6 weeks ago. He came to the Congress—and this relates to what my colleague had said and the debate we will have. General Abizaid said this:

I met with every divisional commander, General Casey, the Corps commander, Gen-

eral Dempsey . . . and I said, in your professional opinion, if we were to bring in more American troops now, does it add considerably to the ability to achieve success in Iraq? And they said no.

This isn't an approximation of what the top general said; it is exactly what he told the Congress: I met with all of my top generals, and I asked them the question, if we were to bring in more troops now, does it add to our ability to achieve success? They said no. That's what General Abizaid said.

Let me describe to you what General Abizaid said following that comment. Again, this is 2 months ago in testimony before the Senate:

The reason is because we want the Iraqis to do more. It's easy for the Iraqis to rely upon us to do this work. I believe that more American forces prevent the Iraqis from doing more, from taking more responsibility for their own future.

Less than 2 months ago, the top general said his top commanders in Iraq all said no to bringing in more troops. Why? Because it will say to the Iraqis: We will do the job. We will do what we would expect you to do.

As we talk about deepening the American involvement in Iraq and the issue of how many troops we are going to have in that battlefield, let me turn to another issue. If we have 20,000-plus troops to send to Iraq, what about Afghanistan?

Our military is, as all of us know, fairly overstretched. We are calling up guardsmen and reservists and some of them second deployments, some of them third deployments all across this country. But in Afghanistan, which was the home of al-Qaida, where the Taliban ruled and where we went first to route the Taliban and create a democracy in Afghanistan, the Taliban, by all accounts, are now taking hold once again and creating an even greater threat.

They are fighting hard to destabilize the Government of Afghanistan. That was our first battle, to go into Afghanistan and kick the Taliban out. We need more troops in Afghanistan now, not less, and yet my understanding is the President's plan would divert troops we have in Afghanistan to go to Iraq.

Let me read something that Mr. John Negroponte, the Director of National Intelligence said last week. He testified before the Select Committee on Intelligence, and here is what he said:

Al Qaeda is the terrorist organization that poses the greatest threat to U.S. interests, including to the homeland.

Al-Qaida is what poses the greatest threat to our interests, including our homeland. Then he went on to say this. This is again John Negroponte, Director of National Intelligence.

Al Qaeda continues to plot attacks against our homeland and other targets with the objective of inflicting mass casualties. And they continue to maintain active connections and relationships that radiate outward from their leaders' secure hideout in Pakistan.

Let me reemphasize:

And they continue to maintain active connections and relationships that radiate out-

ward from their leaders' secure hideout in Pakistan to affiliates throughout the Middle East, northern Africa, and Europe.

What does that mean? Osama bin Laden, do we know him? Yes. He is the person who ordered—claimed and boasted—he ordered the attacks against this country, killing thousands of innocent Americans. He still lives, apparently, in a secure hideout, according to the top intelligence chief in this country, in Pakistan. It seems to me the elimination of the leadership of al-Qaida, the organization that attacked this country, that murdered thousands of innocent Americans, ought to be the primary interest of this country. That is why moving away from Afghanistan and the related activities that ought to exist in Pakistan to deal with what are called "secure hideouts," the secure hideout from which al-Qaida operates, that ought to be job No. 1 for this country.

I don't understand. My colleague Senator CONRAD and I offered an amendment to the Defense appropriations bill last year on this subject. Does anybody hear anybody talking about Osama bin Laden anymore? Or perhaps better described "Osama been forgotten" these days? Nobody wants to talk about it.

Finally, last week the Director of our intelligence in this country said al-Qaida is the most significant threat to this country. The most significant terrorist threat to this country is al-Qaida, and it operates from a secure hideout in Pakistan. If that is true, what are we doing, deciding to find 20,000 troops by pulling some of them out of Afghanistan and moving them to Iraq? If those troops are available, they ought to be dedicated to dealing with al-Qaida and bringing to justice those who committed the attacks against this country. I will have more to say about that at some point, but I did want to make note of what the Director of Intelligence said last week that seems to be almost ignored in this debate about Iraq.

I am going to be talking as well this week about the minimum wage. We will have an aggressive discussion about that. That is going to be the pending issue of the day.

#### HEALTH CARE FOR THE FIRST AMERICANS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I want for a moment this afternoon to talk about another issue that is of great importance to me and I think to a number of our colleagues here in the Senate as well. I am going to chair the Indian Affairs Committee in this session of Congress. I will be working with my colleague Senator CRAIG Thomas from the State of Wyoming. I am pleased to do that.

I want to mention that this week my colleagues here in the Senate are likely to see members of Indian tribes who are coming to town from all over the country. They will likely see them here