

We already know these mine-resistant vehicles give four to five times more protection than uparmored HMMWVs. We already know the casualty and death rate will go down by two-thirds if we have these mine-resistant vehicles, which means we know we should be doing everything possible, as rapidly as possible, because every day we waste one more life is in jeopardy. We can save two-thirds of the lives being lost there—3,400 dead plus, and almost 24,000 severely wounded.

But why did these amazing test efforts only begin to happen this year? Why are we only now starting to build these mine-resistant vehicles? And why are we building them in such small quantities?

We learned this week the Marine commanders in Iraq in February of 2005—February of 2005—realized they needed these vehicles that have a V-shaped hull. They are designed specifically to defeat what everybody in America, unfortunately, has come to know about: IED, improvised explosive devices. They are the roadside bombs and mines that we know cause 70 percent of all the casualties and deaths.

Now, in February of 2005, the first characteristic these commanders asked for—and I am quoting from the statement they sent to the Pentagon called a Universal Needs Statement—they said: We need a vehicle to “protect the crew from IED/mine threat through integrated V-shaped monocoque hull designed specifically to disperse explosive blasts and fragmentary effects.”

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has used his 10 minutes.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may be able to proceed for 3 more minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BIDEN. The bottom line, in simple English, for nonphysicists is, no matter how much you reinforce a flat-bottomed vehicle, when a bomb goes off under the vehicle, it either penetrates the vehicle or penetrates the vehicle, bounces back, and comes back up off the ground again.

With these V-shaped vehicles, what happens is, when the blast goes off—other than the very point of the V—it takes the blast and, instead of it bouncing back on the ground and bouncing back up, it shoots it off to the side, thereby increasing by two-thirds the likelihood of survival.

No one should give us any of the malarkey I have heard from some in the military and the administration about how any uparmored humvee might have satisfied the need. The bottom line is, they cannot do what these V-shaped vehicles can do.

Now, not only have these mine-resistant vehicles been fully tested at Aberdeen, but our allies have been using similar technologies for years. We are going to get down to the bottom of what happened in 2005. But for now, let me get right to the chase. We have an overwhelming moral obliga-

tion to build as many of these vehicles as rapidly as possible and get them to the field as soon as possible—even if we are pulling out every single troop in January. Between now and January, we have an obligation to save lives. It is within our capability and within our power to do so.

One more thing I would bring to the attention of my colleagues. I also learned today—and we will soon find out—I learned today they have also developed, out at the Aberdeen Proving Center, the capacity to be able to thwart the ability of these things called EFPs, explosively formed penetrators. That is going to cost a lot of money. I hope I do not hear from anyone on this floor or anyone in the Congress that, notwithstanding the fact we now have the technology, we are going to wait down the road because it costs too much money to do it now or it will take too much time, and we may have to leave—as one military man said to me: We don’t want to build all these. We are eventually going to be coming home. We will have to leave them behind. That is a little like Franklin Roosevelt saying, when asked to build landing craft for the invasion of D-Day: We don’t want to build too many of these, it costs too much money, because we are going to have to leave some behind.

I say to my colleagues and to the distinguished Senator from West Virginia, Secretary Gates ended his press conference today by saying there were competing interests for dollars. That may be true. But when it comes to the life of an American soldier we know—we know—we know for a fact we can protect, there is no other competing interest. There is no other competing interest. Competing interests may exist, but there is only one interest, and that is as this foolish war continues under this President, our sons and daughters are being killed, and we have the capacity right now to begin to build vehicles that will diminish by two-thirds the casualty rate. There are no other competing interests.

So I am going to continue to talk about this, I say to my colleagues, and I hope once we get the final call from the Pentagon, no one here on this floor will rise to tell me we can’t afford to do this.

I thank my colleague from West Virginia for his extreme courtesy, as always.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The President pro tempore is recognized.

#### MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,

Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from falling hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

John McCrae, who wrote “In Flanders Fields,” was a Canadian physician. He fought on the western front in 1914 before he was transferred to the medical corps and assigned to a hospital in France. He died of pneumonia while on active duty in 1918, and his volume of poetry was published in 1919.

This Monday, in veterans cemeteries around the Nation, flags will be placed, tenderly placed—tenderly placed—before gravestones that carefully and simply mark the thousands of enlisted men and officers, soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines who, like John McCrae, did not come home to ticker tape parades but, rather, to slow caissons trailed by weeping families, final gunfire salutes, and the haunting melodies of “Taps” played by a lone bugler. Some of those graves will be lush with sod, and the final dates will bring back great battles in the campaigns from the Pacific, Africa, or Europe. Other graves will still be raw Earth, with dates on the headstones that mark the ambushes and improvised explosive devices of modern urban insurgent warfare. But on this day, none—none—will be forgotten, and all will be honored for their sacrifice, whatever their rank, whatever their service, and whatever their last proud moment. The red of the poppies and the red stripes in the flags recall the red badge of their courage.

The current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have also given rise to some new ways to remember and honor the fallen. On the Internet, each soldier lost in Iraq has his or her name, his or her picture, and the date and the place of their death listed on a number of Web sites, including those hosted by several newspapers. A traveling exhibit of 1,319 portraits lets “America’s Artists Honor America’s Heroes” through their own talents—through their own talents. When the exhibit is over, those portraits will be given to the soldier’s family. In these ways, each of us can put a face to these statistics. We can see the faces, young and old, just as their families remember them.

The Senate this week has also remembered those who have fallen and those still in harm’s way in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Appropriations Committee has finalized the emergency supplemental bill to fund the operations of the military and provide more protective gear and technology to our troops in the field. I hope that this time the President, our President, will sign the bill and speed those funds to the troops. Also this week, the Senate Armed Services Committee is marking up the fiscal year 2008 Defense authorization bill. This bill too will look after all of our Active-Duty, Guard and Reserve forces that face the prospect of

additional and longer tours in Iraq in the months ahead. Like the emergency supplemental bill put together by the Appropriations Committee, the Defense authorization bill will continue the work of ensuring that the wounded from these conflicts receive the best care and support as they recover from their injuries.

In 430 BC, after the first year of the Peloponnesian War, the Greek historian Thucydides recorded the funeral oration delivered by Pericles, the great Greek general. Thucydides records that Pericles did not speak of the battles but, rather, of the glories—the glories—of Athens and what a privilege it was—what a privilege it was—for each Athenian to live in such a perfect place. Pericles said that the sacrifice of those fallen in battle to keep the nation strong left them with the:

Noblest of all tombs—the noblest of all tombs, I speak not of that in which their remains are laid, but of that in which their glory survives.

Pericles felt there could be no better place to live than Athens and no place more deserving of a soldier's sacrifice. Almost 2,500 years later, I feel confident that every soldier, sailor, airman, and marine who has fought and died in Afghanistan and Iraq probably felt the same way—yes—about the United States.

They were proud to be in uniform and ready to serve the Nation that they loved and held in such high regard. The Nation will ever mourn their loss and honor their sacrifice.

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#### IRAQ

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, the President of the United States has recently stated that we are remaining in Iraq in order to defeat al-Qaida—a summary of a statement he made yesterday. Well, I wish to briefly state what I think the facts are.

Iraq has become a Bush-fulfilling prophecy. Al-Qaida was not there before the war, and it is there now. It is a problem, but it is not the primary problem. In my view, the President of the United States is inadvertently handing al-Qaida a propaganda victory here by vastly exaggerating its role in Iraq.

The sectarian war—the war between Sunnis and Shias, Sunnis and Shias killing each other—is the core problem, and our troops are caught in the middle of that war. New statistics from Iraq make it absolutely clear that sectarian violence is getting worse and now exceeds the levels immediately prior to the surging of American forces over a month ago.

The focus of the President of the United States on al-Qaida and Iraq, ironically, supports exactly what I have been arguing for. We need to dramatically limit the mission of U.S. troops in Iraq, getting them out of the middle of this sectarian civil war and refocusing their mission, which should be battling al-Qaida from occupying

territory in Anbar Province and training Iraqi troops. That would require far fewer troops and allow us to begin to remove American troops immediately and get the vast majority of our combat troops out of Iraq early next year, consistent with the Biden-Levin provision that was in the bill the President vetoed.

Our troops cannot end the sectarian war. Mr. President, 500,000 American troops will not end the sectarian war. What is required is a political solution, even as we continue to take on al-Qaida, which is a growing but not the primary problem in Iraq.

The President continues to bank on a farfetched hope. His hope is well-intended, but it is farfetched that the Iraqis will rally behind a strong democratic central government in Baghdad. But there is no trust within the Government in Baghdad. There is no trust of the Government in Baghdad by the Iraqi people. And there is no capacity by that Government in Baghdad to deliver either services or security.

Instead, the President should throw his full weight—the full weight of his office—behind the solution based upon federalism in Iraq, allowing the Iraqis to have control over the fabric of their daily lives, helping them bring into reality the Iraqi Constitution, where article 1 says: We are a decentralized federal system. We should not impose this. We do not need to. It is already in the Iraqi Constitution.

The President should call for a U.N. summit to get the world's major powers and Iraq's neighbors to push for a political agreement. It is not an answer to put up a straw man and say we remain there because of al-Qaida. What is an answer is to call for the permanent five of the United Nations to call for a regional conference; make Iraq the world's problem. I met with the Security Council permanent four, with us being the fifth, in New York on Monday. It is like pushing an open door. They are ready to respond to the President's request to do that. This is doable. This is necessary. The President should begin to focus on the facts, not the fiction of al-Qaida being our rationale for being there.

I will end where I began. Al-Qaida's presence in Iraq has become a Bush-fulfilling prophecy. They were not there before. They are there now. But they are not the primary problem. It is the vicious cycle of sectarian violence. It must end.

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#### MEMORIAL DAY TRIBUTE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, nearly 6 years after the worst terrorist attacks in American history, we have yet to be hit again on our soil. No one would have thought this possible immediately after the 9/11 attacks. But it is true because America is on offense in the war on terror.

Memorial Day is a time to reflect on the brave men and women of the Armed Forces who have made that

achievement possible, and to honor their sacrifice. Since 2001, over 3,800 Americans have died fighting in Iraq or Afghanistan. Over 60 were from Kentucky.

Our country must honor those who died in the line of duty as well as their families. The debt we owe them can never be repaid. I have had the honor of meeting many of the families of these servicemembers, and I have told them their loved ones did not die in vain.

Many who fought in the war on terror live to tell their stories, and I recently heard one I had like to share involving soldiers from Fort Campbell, KY. Four soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division lived up to the warrior ethos of never leaving a fallen or wounded comrade behind.

The city of Ramadi, Iraq, has seen some of the worst battles between coalition forces and the terrorists. One night in March 2006, SGT Jeremy Wilzcek, SGT Michael Row, PFC Jose Alvarez and PFC Gregory Pushkin, among others, made their way through the city's narrow alleys back to base.

Suddenly Sergeant Row saw two figures run into a house. Immediately suspicious, he stopped the team in its tracks just as machine-gun and small-arms fire and grenades erupted on the street in front of them. The soldiers took cover and returned fire.

Private First Class Alvarez noticed a fellow soldier had been hit and was lying in the middle of the storm of bullets. Without thinking twice, he ran into the line of fire and threw himself over his comrade. But he was too late. The soldier was dead.

Private First Class Alvarez kept firing until he had unloaded his weapon at the enemy, and then stood up and began to carry the soldier's body to a safe area. Sergeant Row provided cover fire, while Sergeant Wilzcek and Private First Class Pushkin ran into the firefight to help Private First Class Alvarez carry their colleague.

The three soldiers were nearing cover when two rocket-propelled grenades exploded yards away from them, knocking all three down and slicing Private First Class Alvarez's knee with shrapnel. But the three continued, finally reaching a safe area out of the path of bullets.

Sergeant Wilzcek and Private First Class Pushkin then ran back into the enemy's kill zone several times, rescuing more trapped soldiers. Sergeant Row continued to lay down cover fire, even though the same explosion that injured Private First Class Alvarez's knee had buried shrapnel deep in his elbow. Finally, every soldier made it to a safe area.

They were out of immediate danger. But gunfire all around them made clear the terrorists were still out to kill. Sergeant Wilzcek, Sergeant Row and Private First Class Pushkin made their way to the roof of a building, and with the advantage of the high ground, successfully killed, captured or drove off