

about priorities. Will we continue to fund a failed strategy, in my view, in Iraq that is leaving us less secure and that is hollowing out our military?

Or will we meet our commitments to our service members and our Nation, by restoring the readiness of our forces which have been severely damaged by this administration's policies?

In my view, the answer is simple. Our military's top generals and admirals have submitted to Congress lists of critical military priorities that would not be funded under the President's fiscal year 2008 budget proposal.

Billions of dollars a week are being squandered in Iraq, while our Nation's military is calling out for additional resources to repair the damage caused by the administration's policies.

My amendment therefore re-prioritizes our defense budget to rebuild our military. It stops financing combat missions in Iraq and redirects funding to meeting priorities for the armed services.

Savings made available by downsizing our force in Iraq would be invested in items identified by each of our military's Service Chiefs. Funding levels for these items would not exceed the amounts specified in their official fiscal year 2008 unfunded requirements lists submitted to Congress earlier this year.

The Army Chief of Staff has found over \$10 billion in critical shortfalls, including funding for specially armored trucks known as MRAPs or mine resistant ambush protected vehicles; night vision goggles, and bomb disposal gear.

The Marine Corps' "unfunded requirement list" submitted by the Commandant includes over \$3 billion for similar priorities as well as new helicopters; communications gear and training equipment.

The Navy's list totals over \$5.6 billion, including helicopters, sailor housing, and aircraft maintenance.

The Air Force's unfunded priorities, totaling over \$16 billion, includes much needed resources to modernize radar systems and restore our fleet of cargo aircraft to help redeploy our troops and their equipment.

The National Guard Bureau Chief has identified over a billion dollars needed to begin rebuilding Guard forces across the United States—to replace and repair vehicles, aircraft, and personal gear, necessary for homeland security missions.

The amendment I would like to offer would allow for funding to restore National Guard equipment readiness. Due to the administration's mismanagement, the National Guard is facing a \$38 billion equipment shortfall, according to General Blum.

A recent report by the U.S. Commission on the National Guard and Reserves disclosed that the administration's policies have actually endangered the Guard's abilities to perform both their overseas and homeland defense missions. Under orders by the ad-

ministration, the National Guard troops have been forced to leave their State's equipment in Iraq and Afghanistan for our troops rotating into combat theaters. Many of their military vehicles and aircraft are being worn down or destroyed in battle, but any critical equipment that may have survived is simply being transferred to other units coming into Iraq and Afghanistan.

In my home State of Connecticut, the adjutant general, MG Thaddeus Martin, recently reported that equipment shortages exceed \$200 million in my State. This includes more than 200 humvees, 21 large support vehicles and tankers and heavy-cargo vehicles, over 600 personnel and crew-served weapons systems, over 1,500 night-vision devices, and even one medium-lift helicopter.

What does all of this mean? It means that we are short of equipment to respond to natural or manmade disasters here at home, short of equipment for training, short of equipment to maintain the standard of maintenance rotation for equipment currently in the field, short of equipment for units deploying into harm's way—short of equipment to protect the American people themselves.

The Government Accountability Office highlighted this very important point in testimony released on October 20, 2005, and I quote it. It stated:

The cumulative effect of these personnel and equipment transfers has been a decline in the readiness of Army National Guard forces for future missions, both overseas and at home.

This data alone should demonstrate to everyone unequivocally that each of us has to fulfill our obligations to our warfighters. Now is the time to begin the rebuilding process. In my view, the sooner we redeploy out of Iraq, get our military out of that situation, the sooner we can redirect these vital funds to rebuild our forces here at home.

None of our choices are easy. I don't suggest by my remarks here that they are. But they are clear choices. It is about time we made them. To govern is to choose the policy that is best for our Nation, even in the face of extreme difficulty. So I call on my colleagues here today to make those choices which experience, commonsense, and overwhelming data compel; that is, to force the President to redeploy, to rebuild our Armed Forces, and to end this disastrous involvement in the civil war.

The last several months have been a story of squandered chances. We have paid for them in American lives. Again, to delay another 2 or 3 months to arrive at a conclusion most of us have already arrived at is something I think is unacceptable. And that lives which may be lost or damaged because we waited 2 or 3 months to arrive at a conclusion that most here already believe to be the case, is certainly a sad day for this body. We cannot even have votes, we cannot even consider the var-

ious ideas we bring to the Chamber that might bring this war and our involvement in it to a close.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1585, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1585) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2007 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Nelson (NE) (for Levin) amendment No. 2011, in the nature of a substitute.

Levin amendment No. 2087 (to amendment No. 2011), to provide for a reduction and transition of U.S. forces in Iraq.

Reed amendment No. 2088 (to amendment No. 2087), to change the enactment date.

Cornyn amendment No. 2100 (to amendment No. 2011), to express the sense of the Senate that it is in the national security interest of the United States that Iraq not become a failed state and a safe haven for terrorists.

McConnell amendment No. 2241 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 2011), relative to a sense of the Senate on the consequences of a failed state in Iraq.

Durbin amendment No. 2252 (to amendment No. 2241), to change the enactment date.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 2274 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2011

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the amendment.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Connecticut [Mr. DODD], for Mr. LEVIN, for himself, Mr. REED, Mr. SMITH, Mr. HAGEL, Mr. KERRY, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. OBAMA, and Mrs. CLINTON, proposes an amendment numbered 2274 to amendment No. 2011.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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