They say: If we don't threaten to withdraw, they won't reconcile and do all the things we want them to do in the Government. If we have to do more than threaten to withdraw if they don't do those things, we are going to have to just withdraw because they haven't satisfied our ambitions and goals for their successful political development.

Proponents of the Reed-Levin amendment claim that we must withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq because it is the only way to bring a responsible end to the war and to force the Iraqi Government to act. Actually, such a withdrawal required by the amendment is far more likely to consign the Iraqi people to mass slaughter.

The Iraq Study Group specifically—that is the group which has been so often cited, the independent group—concluded:

> A premature American departure from Iraq would almost certainly produce greater sectarian violence and further deterioration of conditions.

The study further concluded:

> The near-term results would be a significant power vacuum, great human suffering, regional destabilization, and a threat to the global economy.

Similarly, the intelligence community concluded in the NIE, the National Intelligence Estimate, earlier this year that the consequences of withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq prior to Iraq being able to provide for its own security would be sectarian violence, that sectarian violence would significantly increase, accompanied by massive civilian casualties and displacement. Get that? Sectarian violence would significantly increase, accompanied by massive civilian casualties and displacement.

The intelligence community pointed out how this mass chaos in Iraq would directly threaten the security of the U.S. homeland as it concluded al-Qaida would attempt to use Anbar Province to further attacks outside Iraq. General Hayden, Director of the CIA, succinctly testified to the Senate Intelligence Committee, in response to the question what would happen if we pulled out now from Iraq—that was the question to the Director of the CIA—he said succinctly three quick areas: more Iraqis die from the disorder inside Iraq; Iraq becomes a safe haven, perhaps more dangerous than the one al-Qaida had in Afghanistan; and the conflict in Iraq bleeds over into the neighborhood and threatens serious regional instability.

The Iraq Study Group concluded al-Qaida would depict our withdrawal as a historic victory. They have already claimed historic victory over the Soviet Union.

I ask: Is this a responsible way to leave? Is this a way to see what we have done in Iraq end?

Senator REID, the Democratic leader, said we need to pull out of Iraq so we can ''drive the terrorists back to the darkest caves and corners of the Earth.'' Well, that is a good goal, I suggest. But tell me how that goal would be furthered if we pulled out and gave a safe haven in Iraq to al-Qaida and provided them with a victory of historic proportions. Wouldn't that embolden them? Wouldn't that enable them to recruit more people? Do you think they are then just going to be satisfied there? Wouldn't they then have the initiative? Would not they then be looking where they would hit next?

Our Democratic colleagues argue that it is somehow wrong for those who oppose the Levin amendment to utilize the full procedural protections available to a minority in the Senate. It wasn't wrong when they were using those manners on a regular basis, trust me. I think we set a record last year or the year before on these filibusters and the number of times it took 60 votes to do something or not succeed in getting 60 votes. But they suggest that somehow it is inappropriate to use our well-established, commonly used procedure, routinely done, to require 60 votes on a matter of great importance such as this. Of course, I would suggest that is when, in matters of great importance, the 60-vote rule is most needed and most appropriate.

To press the point further, I strongly believe that whatever the inclinations of Senators on the conduct of the war in Iraq, to change our strategy now before we even hear from General Petraeus in September would be a colossal blunder for a host of reasons. To do so would be unthinkable. It must not and I believe will not happen. This Senator would be derelict in his duty if he did not make use of every traditional proper rule of procedure in this Senate to see that it does not happen, and that I will do. We agreed to execute this surge and to take a report in September. That is what we should do. We already have a new strategy.

We debated it at length in April and in May. Bipartisan meetings occurred. The Democratic leader and the Republican leader went to the White House, and they talked and they talked, and we finally agreed and passed, 80 to 14, the bill that funds this surge. That is our new strategy.

We knew exactly what we were voting for. There was no dispute about it. We were voting for an increase in American soldiers in Iraq and a new emphasis on General Petraeus's strategy of counterinsurgency and increasing security in Baghdad particularly. That is the strategy General Petraeus is now executing. Are we now to change it again? Are we now to have a strategy de jure or a new one every week based on coffee shop talk or some poll that just came in?

Senator REID earlier today quoted polls that said people agree with him. He said someone talked to his brother. Let's get real here. The established bipartisan policy that we passed 80 to 14, 53 days ago, must not be lightly changed on polls and anecdotes—change without even listening to the general who is in Iraq, seeking his opinion. It would embarrass the United States before our allies and the world. Indeed, U.N. Security General Ban Ki-moon yesterday urged us to exercise ''great caution'' in considering a rapid withdrawal from Iraq. He said:

> It is not my place to inject myself into this discussion taking place between the American people, government and Congress. But I'd like to tell you that a great caution should be taken for the sake of the Iraqi people. Any abrupt withdrawal or decision may lead to a further deterioration.

Well, is that a product of President Bush's pressure or some hardheadedness? No. The Secretary General is very worried that we may abruptly alter our commitments and policies without any rational plan for what would happen next.

A rushed withdrawal, I think, could even signal political panic. It could signal a lack of seriousness and thoughtfulness. It is unthinkable that the Senate would vote to flip-flop our strategy while our soldiers at this very moment work to execute the congressional policy we assigned them 54 days ago.

Senator REID and Speaker PELOSI will have in effect taken over, I suppose, as Commander in Chief in conducting this military action and begun to direct the very deployment of our soldiers on the battlefield, telling them what they can and cannot do, without any advice from the military and, indeed, contrary to our Commander's wishes and opinions. They do not even want to hear his report, the one we asked him to give just a few days ago.

Well, maybe somebody, if they are going to take over that, would have to tell him what we voted on if this bill were to pass. Hopefully, it will not. A phone call might go like this: General Petraeus, this is Senate Majority Leader HARRY REID. I know we confirmed you to lead the new surge, and after much debate we voted on May 24, 80 to 14, to approve and to fully fund your new surge strategy. I voted ''yes'' for it, too. But that was then. That was 54 days ago. Since then we have heard from antiwar activists—some of them come in cute pink suits and wear crowns—from many concerned citizens, and somebody talked to my brother, and maybe a few pollsters and political consultants have been consulted. So just forget that old strategy. We now have voted for a new one. It will be very popular here. Prepare for rapid withdrawal of your forces. Your work is a failure. You will not succeed. We do not want to listen to your report. Just make sure you comply with our mandates and pull out of there.

Well, he might go on—the majority leader might—well, yes, we did say you would have until your report in September, but that promise was a long time ago. It was 54 days ago. Much has changed here at home. Just follow our new strategy. Well, General Petraeus, I know you feel something is owed to our soldiers out there who are at risk working to execute the surge strategy