providing a 2-year ''fix'' for physician payments in the package he develops in the coming month.

I share his belief that ultimately we need to repeal the SGR and establish a Medicare physician payment system that will provide stable, positive payment updates to preserve Medicare beneficiaries' access to high-quality care for the long term. I hope we will be able to begin that process under his leadership next year.

WAR IN IRAQ

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, the Senate has spent little time in recent weeks discussing Iraq, but we cannot ignore the latest grim news from this misguided war. The Associated Press reported this week that 2007 is now the deadliest year in Iraq for U.S. troops—even though we still have almost 2 months of this year remaining. I will ask that the article be printed in the RECORD.

According to a recent Associated Press count at least 3,858 Americans have been killed and 28,385 Americans have been wounded in Iraq. We are fast approaching two very grim milestones—4,000 killed and 30,000 casualties. We should stop and consider the implications of these numbers. I grieve for those who are lost and wounded, and I am all the more determined that no more of our brave men and women should be killed in a war that has no end in sight and is not making our country safer.

Instead of acknowledging that these sad milestones are indications of a failed policy, the administration is once again digging it in heels. Lately, it has been talking about the recent decline in U.S. deaths as a justification for continuing its open-ended military policies in Iraq.

The American people are not fooled by these claims of success. They know all too well that the President's policies are simply buying time, and they continue to reject them. A recent ABC News/Washington Post poll illustrates that a majority of Americans are still calling for a change of course in Iraq. 59 percent of Americans think we're not making significant progress in Iraq and 6 out of 10 that's 60 percent of Americans want the level of U.S. forces reduced. And yet, the President ignores the wishes of the public, offering a small, token drawdown of forces in the near future but no timeline as to when significant numbers of troops will come home.

If the goal of the surge was to provide a window for political reconciliation, as the President outlined last January, victory remains elusive. Meanwhile, Al-Qaida has reconstituted and strengthened itself along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region at the same time while we have been focused on fighting a war in Iraq. The President likes to say that Iraq is the central front in the war on terror instead of fixing all his attention on Iraq, he needs to address what is happening hundreds of miles to the east.

Again and again, the American people have once again voiced their opinion that this war makes no sense and that they expect us uphold our congressional responsibilities and use our power to end it. It is bad enough to have the President disregard the American people by escalating our involvement in Iraq. Despite the efforts of Democratic leaders, Congress is also ignoring the will of the American people.

And so I urge my colleagues not to allow Iraq to remain on the congressional backburner. We cannot say we've done everything possible to end the war—we cannot say we are acting on our constituents' top concern—when we are not discussing, not debating, and certainly not voting on Iraq.

We cannot afford to sideline this critical issue at a time when we are close to reaching 4,000 American men and women killed and 30,000 wounded in a misguided, never-ending war. It is a war that will continue through the waning days of this administration unless we summon our congressional power to end it. It is a war that we cannot sit back and doing nothing about. It is a war that has cost over half trillion dollars, stretched our military to the breaking point, and made us less safe. It is an unacceptable war.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the article from the Associated press to which I referred be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

AP: DEADLIEST YEAR FOR U.S. IN IRAQ—MILITARY ANNOUNCES DEATHS OF FIVE U.S. SOLDIERS, RAISING YEAR'S TOTAL TO 852

BAGHDAD.—Five more U.S. troops were killed in Iraq, the military said Tuesday—making 2007 the deadliest year for American forces in Iraq, according to an Associated Press count.

At least 852 U.S. military personnel have died in Iraq so far this year—the highest annual toll since the war began in March 2003, according to AP figures. Some 850 troops died in 2004.

The grim milestone passed despite a sharp drop in U.S. and Iraqi deaths here in recent months, after a 30,000-strong U.S. force buildup.

DEADLY IEDS

The five U.S. soldiers died Monday in two separate attacks, Rear Adm. Gregory Smith, director of the Multi-National Force-Iraq's communications division, told reporters Tuesday. ''We lost five soldiers yesterday in two unfortunate incidents, both involving IEDs,'' he said, using the military's shorthand for improvised explosive devices—roadside bombs.

Their deaths brought to at least 3,855 the number of U.S. troops who have died since the beginning of the Iraq war, according to an AP count. The figure includes eight civilians working for the military.

At least 852 American military members died in Iraq in 2007, compared with 850 troops in 2004. That year saw mostly larger, more conventional battles like the campaign to cleanse Fallujah of Sunni militants in November, and U.S. clashes with Shiite militiamen in the sect's holy city of Najaf in August.

WIDENING REACH OF U.S. MILITARY

But the American military in Iraq reached its highest troop levels in Iraq this year—165,000. Moreover, the military's decision to send soldiers out of large bases and into Iraqi communities means more troops have seen more ''contact with enemy forces'' than ever before, said Maj. Winfield Danielson, a U.S. military spokesman in Baghdad.

''It's due to the troop surge, which allowed us to go into areas that were previously safe havens for insurgents,'' Danielson told the AP on Sunday. ''Having more soldiers, and having them out in the communities, certainly contributes to our casualties.''

Last spring, U.S. platoons took up positions—often in abandoned houses or in muddy, half-collapsed police stations—at the heart of neighborhoods across Baghdad and nearby communities.

The move was part of President Bush's new strategy to drive al-Qaida from the capital.

It was the first time many residents had seen U.S. troops up close, rather than whizzing by in armored convoys en route to huge bases that house thousands of troops. And it was the first time many U.S. troops went to bed each night outside those fortresses, to the sounds of Iraqi life: gunfire, the roar of helicopters overhead and an occasional explosion.

The move has worked, U.S. officials say. Increasingly, the sounds of Baghdad include children playing on the streets.

''It's allowed Iraqi civilians to get more comfortable with U.S. forces—increasing the number of tips we get from Iraqi citizens,'' Danielson said. ''That leads us to insurgent leaders and cells, and cleaning those up has led to a decline in violence over the past couple months.''

Death tolls for Americans and Iraqis have fallen dramatically in recent months, as have the number of bombings, shootings and other violence.

At least 1,023 Iraqi civilians died in September; in October, that figure was just 875. The number of U.S. troop deaths dropped from 65 to 36 in the same period, according to statistics kept by the AP. That's the lowest monthly toll of American deaths this year.

On average, 56 Iraqis—civilians and security forces have died each day so far in 2007, according to the AP count.

MASS GRAVE LOCATED

Meantime, Iraqi troops discovered 22 bodies in a mass grave in the Lake Tharthar area northwest of Baghdad, the U.S. military also said Tuesday. The bodies were found during a joint operation Saturday.

It was the second mass grave found in the area in less than a month.

Meanwhile, the United States said it planned to release nine Iranian prisoners in the coming days, including two captured when U.S. troops stormed an Iranian government office in Irbil last January. The office was shut after the raid, but it reopened as an Iranian consulate on Tuesday, Iraqi and Iranian officials said.

GATES SAYS IRAN FULFILLS PLEDGE

A military spokesman said Iran appears to have kept its promise to stop the flow into Iraq of bomb-making materials and other weaponry that Washington says has inflamed insurgent violence and caused many American troop casualties.

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said last week that Iran had made such assurances to the Iraqi government.

''It's our best judgment that these particular EFPs . . . in recent large cache finds do not appear to have arrived here in Iraq after those pledges were made,'' Smith said.

Among the weapons Washington has accused Iran of supplying to Iraqi insurgents are EFPs, or explosively formed projectiles. They fire a slug of molten metal capable of penetrating even the most heavily armored military vehicles, and thus are more deadly than other roadside bombs.

The No. 2 U.S. commander in Iraq, Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, said last week that there had been a sharp decline in the number of EFPs found in Iraq in the last three months. At the time, he and Gates both said it was too early to tell whether the trend would hold, and whether it could be attributed to action by Iranian authorities. Iran publicly denies that it has sent weapons to Shiite militias in Iraq.

IRAN

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, the President of the United States is pursuing a strategy towards Iran that is badly flawed, dangerous, and likely doomed to failure. I am deeply concerned about Iran's nuclear program and its support for terrorism, and by indications that it is aiding groups in Iraq that are killing American troops, but the administration has so far failed to come up with an effective way to address these very serious matters.

For instance, less than 2 weeks ago the administration designated the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps as a material supporter of terrorism, and the IRGC for proliferation activities. I support sanctions that target proliferators and have introduced legislation that would strengthen our sanctions regime, but the designation of Iranian government entities raises new policy questions that do not seem to have been fully explored, and it may very well be counterproductive.

Moreover, this poorly timed action undermines efforts to win support for multilateral initiatives. Instead of acting alone, we should maintain and strengthen the international community's collective ability to counter Iranian ambitions, including with regard to its nuclear program.

Iran's actions pose serious threats to our national security. But aggressive saber-rattling is not an appropriate or effective response. The administration has shown repeatedly that it is too quick to turn to military power, and its threat, to address problems overseas. It has also shown time and again an inability to see the big picture. And it still seems to prefer unilateral over multilateral approaches. All of these are mistakes we cannot afford to have repeated.

We can't focus on Iran in isolation, the way the administration has focused for so long on Iraq without considering a broader context or taking a more comprehensive approach.

Instead of repeating the myopia of Iraq, the administration should approach the problem of Iran through a more strategic lens one that incorporates a broader and more integrated vision, that takes into account regional concerns, and that is consistent with our top national security priority, which is the fight against al-Qaida and its affiliates. We need a national security strategy that addresses al-Qaida, Iran, Iraq, and the many other problems we face. Instead, the administration prefers to focus on Iraq, and now Iran, as if we had the luxury of addressing these challenges in isolation.

We must vigorously oppose any efforts by Iran to acquire nuclear weapons and its support to terrorist organizations that goes almost without saying. But we must curb these actions by seeing the whole board and by using more of the tools at our disposal. And that is not happening. Instead, the administration is taking an unnecessarily belligerent approach that runs the risk of increasing our vulnerability, both at home and abroad.

The United States should be working in unison with the international community, which shares our concern over Iran's nuclear program. At the same time as the new sanctions were announced, the European Union's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, was meeting in Rome with Iran's negotiators to discuss Tehran's nuclear program and discussions among the EU+ 3 comprised of France, Germany and the UK plus China, Russia and U.S.—are likely to continue at the end of November following the completion of another IAEA report.

In the past, Secretary Rice and others at State have publicly supported these talks and expressed confidence in the negotiations. But the administration's hard line position is unlikely to win over Russia and China, without whom there can be little progress.

The administration should be trying to persuade our friends and allies to increase their economic pressure on Iran, ideally through the U.N. Rather than imposing unilateral sanctions, we should be pressing the EU to announce multilateral sanctions, which would have a much greater impact given that we have not traded or invested in Iran for nearly 30 years. Instead, our bellicose rhetoric and hard-line approach could be undermining our ability to gain support from—Russia, China and even from some EU countries—to implement multilateral sanctions that Iran cannot ignore.

Trying to unilaterally isolate Iran further is unlikely to curb its nuclear program. And it won't make sure that Iran does not aid the proliferation of and access to weapons in Iraq. Veiled, and not-so-veiled, threats of military action aren't likely to work either. They are, however, likely to embolden Iran's hardliners as they seek to thwart moderates in that country who might otherwise encourage dialogue or political reform.

Instead of using the Iraq focused bilateral talks that have occurred in Baghdad as a platform from which to build, we are launching ourselves on to a collision course that may further endanger U.S. troops in Iraq in the near term. And that might only be the beginning. Our massive presence in Iraq undermines our ability to deal with Iran. It is draining our resources, exhausting our troops, exposing them to potential Iranian attacks, and undermining our credibility.

We should redeploy our troops from Iraq so that we can deal with Iran from a position of greater strength. Instead, the President is leading us deeper into the quagmire that his misguided policies in Iraq created.

It is essential that those of us here in Congress condemn the violent and defiant statements coming out of Iran. But we also have a responsibility as a coequal branch of government to respond to this administration's aggressive words, ill-considered decisions and ad hoc policies, particularly when they may undermine our own national security. Dealing with Iran is a daunting task. But we are only making it more difficult with our counterproductive policies of isolation and warmongering. We cannot again succumb to the shortsightedness that keeps us fixated on Iraq and drains the attention and resources needed to combat threats to our national security around the world.

CORPORATE AVERAGE FUEL ECONOMY STANDARDS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, as Congress continues to work on comprehensive energy legislation, I want to discuss the importance to my constituents of enacting strong yet achievable corporate average fuel economy standards.

The final energy package needs to increase vehicle fuel economy requirements, but it should do so without undercutting hardworking families in Wisconsin and across the country. Between manufacturing, dealerships, and the automotive parts industry, there are upwards of 50,000 auto jobs in Wisconsin. Having grown up in Janesville—home to a General Motors plant—I understand how important the auto industry is to the State's economy and its communities. For far too long, under different administrations and different Congresses, the U.S. has pursued trade and other policies that have undermined our country's manufacturing base. Now, it is time to pay attention to the concerns of America's workers.

We can have strong and achievable CAFE standards. However, this will require several reasonable revisions to the Energy bill that the Senate passed. For starters, separate standards for cars and trucks need to be maintained. I recently organized a coalition of senators to write the Senate's Democratic leadership and urge it to maintain the distinction in current law between standards for cars and trucks. Passenger cars and light-duty trucks are inherently different. They should have