Mr. President, there has been almost a raging debate

around here these last couple of days on evaluations of what is taking

place in Iraq, where do we stand in this war--almost a war of

attrition, as I see it.

And included in the reports on deaths, killings, this morning we

heard about an explosion, with suicide bombers detonating a bomb in a

mosque that killed around 40 people. It is almost a daily thing that we

hear and see, the horror of families being torn apart by the loss of a

loved one. Children, men, women, it does not matter. It is just

universal killing and demolition. It is a terrible act to witness.

Now we have some different news that has come about to accompany

those stories of horror from Iraq. Everybody now knows that the Vice

President's former chief of staff, Scooter Libby, has been indicted as

part of the investigation into the leak of classified material from the

White House.

I remember when this controversy broke. President Bush acted

incredulous that anyone would leak classified national security

information. In fact, in September 2003, the President said:

But now we find out--I think embarrassingly for the President,

embarrassingly for the United States--we now find out that the

President himself was ordering a leak of classified material. And he

leaked that classified information for political reasons. He was trying

to undo some of the political damage caused by the disclosure that the

intelligence community did not believe Iraq was trying to purchase

uranium. There it was: the reason we went to Iraq in the first place,

and substantial doubts.

People who supported that view are now challenging the intelligence

that led us there, or at least the intelligence reports we got. Now,

here we are, still bogged down in Iraq, with no hope in sight to fix

the mess we have caused there.

Yesterday, there was debate between two of our colleagues. One was

Senator Kerry, who served in Vietnam, decorated for that service, the

other was the Senator from Colorado, who was harsh in his criticism of

Senator Kerry's speech on Iraq.

Now, Senator Kerry and I are both veterans. I am a veteran of World

War II, and I served in Europe during the war. His, again,

distinguished service in Vietnam is well known. So we are both

veterans, and we are very interested in the military analysis of the

Senator from Colorado.

The speech of the Senator from Colorado sounded much like White House

talking points: short on facts, long on innuendo and fantasy.

While politicians in Washington sometimes wear rose-colored glasses

and fantasize about the situation in Iraq, American troops are dying,

American troops are wounded. One need only visit Walter Reed Hospital

to see how serious some of those wounds are. People have lost limbs.

People lose their sight. People suffer very severely from post-

traumatic stress, invisible wounds that penetrate, nevertheless, very

deeply.

I have gone to many memorial services and funerals for young people

from New Jersey who died in Iraq. Seventy-three soldiers from my home

State of New Jersey have died in Iraq and Afghanistan. As I mentioned,

I have visited Walter Reed Army Hospital here in Washington several

times, and I have been struck by the incredible resilience and

dedication to our country of those young Americans, those who want to

be able to pick up arms again so they can do their duty. And while

these brave men and women put their lives on the line, the

administration is simply ignoring reality.

Paul Eaton, a former commanding general of the Coalition Military

Assistance and Training Team, wrote in the New York Times on March 19,

recently, that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is--and here I

quote the Times. Eaton further said that Rumsfeld

This past Sunday on ``Meet The Press,'' retired General Anthony

Zinni, who just published a book, repeated the call for Mr. Rumsfeld to

resign. General Zinni of the U.S. Marine Corps is a former Commander of

the Central Command. He said Secretary Rumsfeld should be held

accountable for tactical mistakes in Iraq.

I had the opportunity the other night to go to a testimonial for

General Shalikashvili and saw films of him done with former Secretary

of State Colin Powell, President Clinton--all kinds of testimonials. As

I looked at General Shalikashvili, I recalled how splendidly he handled

his assignment as the Chief of the joint members of the senior staff

and recalled that he said that in Iraq we would need perhaps 300,000

troops or more. He was right. And we never delivered on that

commitment. As a consequence, in many military circles it is believed

that lack of force is responsible for some of the problems we currently

see.

Several days after General Zinni spoke, President Bush dismissed

calls for Rumsfeld to step down, saying he was ``satisfied'' with his

performance.

How in the world can the Commander-in-Chief, President Bush, be

satisfied with the situation in Iraq? It is chaotic. It is near a civil

war. The definition of a ``civil war'' is that people within the same

country are fighting one another. My gosh, it could not be clearer.

So how can he be satisfied with Secretary Rumsfeld's miscalculations,

with his profound errors in judgment, with his stubborn unwillingness

to admit mistakes?

These mistakes have had tragic consequences--tragic for the nearly

2,400 American men and women who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan,

tragic for the families they have left behind.

To examine the incompetence a little bit further--I have not been in

Iraq in the last couple of years. I was there then, and I met with

troops, and they were asking for better body armor. They were asking

for better Humvee armor. And it took 2 years to loosen up those

products to protect our troops. How incompetent must one be for the

President not to be up in arms?

After my visit, I said I was going to the Defense Department, and

did, requesting expedited treatment for these articles that our troops

needed to protect themselves and to fight the war fully.

We know that most of the claims of the Bush administration in the

leadup

to war were simply false. The administration claimed there was a

connection between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida. Not true.

The Bush administration claimed that there were weapons of mass

destruction there. Not true.

The Bush administration claimed that the war would cost ``in the

range of 50 to 60 billion dollars.'' Not true. The wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan, including the next supplemental to be brought before the

Congress in coming weeks, will total a half a trillion dollars, nearly

$7 billion a month spent just in Iraq.

The Bush administration said before the war the oil revenues from

Iraq could bring ``between 50 and 100 billion [dollars] over the course

of the next two to three years.'' Not true again.

President Bush announced, ``Mission accomplished,'' on May 1, 2003.

He lulled the Nation into believing that it was all settled: Families,

look forward to your kids coming home. Look forward to families

restored. Look forward to fathers and mothers coming back to their

children. He told the Nation that major combat in Iraq was over. Not

true. Ninety percent of the Americans who have died in Iraq have died

since combat operations had supposedly ``ended.''

The Bush administration claimed that the Iraq insurgency was in its

``last throes.'' Not true. We know the insurgency has gained strength.

General Abizaid recently said the number of foreign terrorists

infiltrating Iraq has increased.

Since the last week of February, sectarian violence and death have

reached new heights, while electricity production has dropped below

prewar levels. Unemployment ranges from 30 to 60 percent.

The American people do not want their leader to deny reality. They

want to hear the truth.

People on the floor of the Senate have heard me say it time and time

again: I will never understand why the President of the United States

refuses to let journalists, photographers, journalists who do

photography, come in and take pictures of flag-draped coffins--flag-

draped coffins. It is the country's last sign of honoring its dead.

They are unable to take pictures of that because they do not want to

tell the American people the truth about what is happening. It is, in

my view, insulting to those families whose loved ones sacrificed their

lives on the battlefield. Outrageous.

They do not want to tell us the truth. What they want to do is tell

us untruths. Leaking information is inexcusable, when the penalties for

anyone who leaks that information could be jail time.

The President of the United States, President Bush, under the guise

of releasing the classification of sensitive material, had passed

information, with Vice President Cheney apparently being the person who

furnished it, according to Libby, who is now fighting for his freedom.

So he is saying things that he can prove, I would imagine; otherwise,

he would not dare say it.

We are sick and tired of this war. I am not saying what the date is

that we have to leave there, but I am saying that the date has passed

for the truth, for knowing what is really happening there, for knowing

what our troops and their families can expect.

Last week, I went to a return-home function in New Jersey, people who

have come back. They were away, some of them, 18 months--little kids

running around who haven't seen their fathers or mothers for that

period of time. It is outrageous. We are in a state of confusion that

defies imagination, that we, this country, with all of its might and

all of its wealth, can't figure out some way to deal with this problem,

after having made empty promises about how easy it was going to be--

``treats and sweets'' was one of the expressions used--totally

misunderstanding, not thinking about what it was going to take, not

only to fight this war but how do you win it. And winning it means that

you go home triumphant. Not so.

We see in front of us a situation that reminds us of the sad days of

Vietnam, when we wanted to extricate ourselves and couldn't quite do it

until the pain was so excruciating that the population could no longer

stand it. We need a leader who sees clearly what is really happening

and who speaks candidly--we can take bad news; we don't like it, but we

can take it--about what is taking place in front of our eyes on

television and newspapers in our homes. We can take the news. We will

accept it and fight on to rebuild our strength and our moral conviction

about what we are doing. But we need to know the truth on how to do

that.