Mr. President, the country is consumed with the

appearance this week of General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker from

Iraq. This is our annual report. Companies make annual reports. People

like Warren Buffett call in to Omaha, NE, to shareholders of Berkshire

Hathaway to talk about the state of his corporation and what the

prospects are of the future. It has become an annual occurrence here on

Capitol Hill that the two leaders from the diplomatic and military side

come and make their report to Congress.

This is indeed the beginning of the sixth year of this war. This war

in Iraq has lasted longer than World War II. By the end of this summer,

it will have lasted longer than World War I and World War II combined.

We have lost over 4,000 of our best and bravest, our

men and women in uniform who have given their lives in this conflict--

30,000 injured. Many with permanent injuries have returned from this

battlefield.

Our military has been stretched to the absolute limit. There is no

doubt in my mind that the U.S. military is the best in the world. You

only have to meet them, you only have to understand the challenges they

have faced and the success they have shown to know that. But it

troubles me that in the midst of this debate about how long we can stay

in Iraq, we are actually saying: How long can our military stay in Iraq

with the support of the American people?

An honest appraisal of the American military today, in the sixth year

of this war, will tell you they have paid a heavy price beyond the

deaths and injuries. There is a serious challenge facing our military.

The leaders--General Cody, who testified just a few weeks ago, and

General McCaffrey--have told us that Iraq has pushed the U.S. Army to

the breaking point. That is a sobering appraisal by the military itself

of what this war has done to our great military.

Just the other day, the Army reported increased stress, anxiety, and

depression for 27 percent of soldiers returning to Iraq for a third and

fourth tour. Those of us who have been there to meet with soldiers, as

I have on three different occasions, will tell you that these

extraordinarily long deployments of our soldiers are virtually

unprecedented since World War II, and they have taken their toll.

Our soldiers today are usually married. In previous wars, they were

not. So they go to battle remembering that they have left behind

spouses and children. On a daily basis, they are in contact by e-mail.

They know if the car doesn't start. They know when the baby has to go

to the doctor. They know when there is a problem paying the bills. They

know it in real time.

In addition to the stress of being in battle and in combat, they have

the added stress of separation from their families and the knowledge

that for many of them it will be 15 months in deployment before they

can come home.

A lieutenant colonel from Georgia, a career man, said to me as I

left: Senator, we have to do something about these deployments. They

are just entirely too long. And the period between deployments isn't

long enough. He talked about leaving Georgia with his daughter in the

fifth grade and returning after his deployment to find her in the

seventh grade. He missed a year of her life.

He also talked about the fact that bringing these troops home for a

year or sometimes even less before they are sent away again doesn't

give them time to rest, to reunite with their families, to be

reequipped, retrained, and to bring in new recruits and integrate them

into the unit. We turn them around so quickly because this

administration, and those who support it, look beyond the obvious, take

for granted that the military will be there time and time again, and

pursue a foreign policy which, sadly, has been a misguided policy from

the start.

I will recall that evening as long as I serve in this body, in

October of 2002, when we cast that fateful vote to give President

George W. Bush the authority to invade Iraq, an authority which he

used. It was a historic night and a sad night for many of us. Twenty-

three Senators, 1 Republican and 22 Democrats, voted against the

authorization to invade Iraq. I recall that evening believing that this

President was poised and prepared and ready to go into Iraq. He had

misled through statements--inaccurate statements. The American people

were misled about the circumstance involving that invasion.

Do you recall the fear we had? We were told about weapons of mass

destruction--biological, chemical weapons, nuclear weapons. We were

told Saddam Hussein was somehow linked to the terrible tragedy of 9/11.

We were told his continued presence in the Middle East made it more

dangerous for Israel, for many of our closest friends and allies. We

were told he was developing predator aircraft that could be sent in

remote ways to drop these weapons of mass destruction all around the

Middle East, if not beyond.

Virtually every one of those statements made by this administration

prior to the invasion of Iraq was wrong, inaccurate, and was proven to

have been false. America was misled into this war.

That does not diminish in any way the bravery and courage and

determination of our troops, but it says that the policymakers, many of

whom are finally going to leave the scene in a few months, have to

accept the verdict of history that they were wrong. They were wrong to

lead us into this war, and the price we have paid has been a heavy

price for that deception and that mistake.

They come now and tell us that even if we were wrong getting into

this war, even if it lasted far longer than anyone anticipated, even if

the cost of this war in human lives and actual dollars went

dramatically beyond anyone's expectation, we have to ``stay the

course.'' We have to stay the course. How many times have we been told

by these military leaders and by the President that when the Iraqis are

prepared to stand up with their own defense force, America's troops can

stand down? I have heard that until I am weary of it.

Years ago, when I went to Iraq, I was greeted then by General

Petraeus, who was not in charge but was part of the leadership there,

and he took me off for a little exercise at the airfield to show me

what the troops were doing--the Iraqi troops. I couldn't tell you

whether it demonstrated skill or not. I am not an expert in military

deployment by any means. But a handful of Iraqi soldiers, whose faces

were hooded so they couldn't be identified by other Iraqis, went

through the routine of a drill. I suppose it was undertaken to impress

us. It didn't. I thought to myself: I will believe the Iraqi military

has really reached the point of professionalism when they start

replacing American soldiers and American soldiers start coming home.

Year after weary year, we have invested millions and millions of

dollars in the training of their soldiers and their police. Yet 140,000

of our soldiers are still rising this morning and every morning risking

their lives for the people of Iraq.

I sometimes wonder if the Iraqi people have really come to the basic

conclusion as to whether they are a nation worth fighting for. I do not

know the answer to that. When you hear what is going on in Iraq

recently, where 1,000 Iraqi soldiers turned and deserted in battle, it

is not encouraging. It tells me that despite all the time, all the

money, and all the bloodshed, this war continues unabated.

I know now that many want to see this administration leave and hand

over the quagmire of Iraq to the next President. That next President,

whoever that person may be, will inherit two wars from this

administration--in Iraq and Afghanistan--a recession, a situation where

health care across America is in crisis, an energy challenge the likes

of which we have never seen in this country, an environmental challenge

of global warming that challenges not only our Nation but the entire

world, entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare on the

ropes, and, unfortunately, a country that needs real leadership. That

is the legacy of the Bush administration.

For General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker to come before us and

talk about staying the course for another 9 or 10 months, to me betrays

the obvious. We have given the Iraqi people more than any nation can

ask, in terms of human life and treasure. It is estimated that the

total cost of this war will be somewhere in the range of $3 trillion.

What could we have done with that money in America had it been spent

for America's strength? Just imagine: We could have provided 5.7

million Americans with health coverage each year since the war began,

hired 430,000 new teachers across America, built 1 million units of

affordable housing, and provided 4-year scholarships at State

universities for 4.7 million students. Instead, the money has been sunk

in Iraq.

Just so the record is straight, the Iraqis are not paupers. They have

bountiful sources of oil that they sell. While we labor with one of the

largest deficits--in fact, the largest deficit in the history of the

United States, a debt, a mortgage we are passing on to our children--

while we labor with that and are asked by the President to send another

$100 billion into Iraq with the next request coming in just a few days,

the Iraqis today have a surplus in their

treasury of over $25 billion. We are sacrificing in America to send

money to Iraq to rebuild their country while they are building a

surplus in their treasury from their oil revenues. What is wrong with

this picture? There is no earthly explanation for that, and it is a

fact.

I think, too, of what this means in the long term for the next

President. That next President is going to inherit a terrible

situation, finding an honorable way out of Iraq. I notice when the

Republicans refer to that they always talk about a precipitous

withdrawal. No one is calling for that. But the Democratic candidates

for President are talking about bringing our troops home. I do not

believe there is any other way for the Iraqis to be convinced that this

is their nation and their future and their responsibility. As long as

they can dial 9-1-1 and order up the best and bravest soldiers in the

world to come from America and defend them, they are not going to

accept their responsibility and do what is necessary.

Meanwhile, our military is devastated by this war. West Point-

educated officers are leaving the Army in record numbers. Between 2001

and 2004, there was a doubling of the Army's divorce rate and a

dramatic increase in suicide among the members of the military,

particularly from the National Guard. In addition to that, we know we

are waiving requirements for recruits. One out of eight new Army

recruits has a criminal record, some with serious charges. We are

lowering the requirements for basic education to bring in recruits. We

are offering thousands of dollars to 19-year-olds fresh out of high

school if they will just sign up to be in the Army. That is not good

for the future of our country. It is not good for the future of our

military.

We know that an estimated 90,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed,

and maybe more, innocent people caught in the crossfire of a war. We

know there are literally millions of Iraqi refugees, and shamefully the

United States has been unwilling to even accept Iraqi refugees who have

risked their lives for our troops and our safety. It is just

unconscionable that countries around the world are accepting these

refugees and the United States, which has needed them and used them,

refuses to accept them. It is a fact.

We have dangerously emboldened Iran, which is moving closer to the

development of nuclear weapons with this morning's announcement. In

fact, it was actually Iran that helped broker an end to the recent

violence in Basra.

If this invasion of Iraq was determined to show the strength of the

United States, it is hard to show while we are still there 6 years

later with no end in sight. If this invasion of Iraq was designed to

diminish the power of Iran in the Middle East, it is hard to believe

anyone could make that assertion today, with proof to back it up. That

is the reality of what we face.

When I hear Senator McCain and Republican leaders talk about staying

the course, I understand--and I hope Americans do--that we need to

change the course. We need to change the direction of this war. We need

to start to bring our brave soldiers home to the victor's welcome they

deserve. We need to start to say to the Iraqis: Stand up and defend

your own country. We need to start extricating ourselves from Iraq so

this money we are now spending to build Iraq and make it stronger can

give us strength right here at home. Instead of creating jobs in Iraq,

we should be creating good-paying jobs right here in America, jobs that

can't be outsourced, jobs that make a decent paycheck with benefits and

health care and a promise of a good pension. We should be investing in

this country's schools, in this country's hospitals, in this country's

infrastructure, and the Iraqis should use their oil revenues to

strengthen their own country and come together and make the hard

political decisions which they have avoided.

I will close and turn it over to my colleague, Senator Cardin from

Maryland, by telling you that the debate will continue, and in a few

weeks the President's supplemental request will be before us. It is

another opportunity for us to engage this Chamber in a debate. I know

and we all know that the majority of Republicans refuse to join us in

talking about the change in direction in this war. We know as well that

this President will veto anything that changes his policies. He is

determined to leave office with Iraq in the same condition that we know

it today, with no change in basic policy before us.

The time is coming and coming soon--in November--when the American

people have the last word. Finally, after 4 years, they get a chance to

speak. They get a chance to pick a leader, to change the direction of

this country in the right way, to make certain we have economic

policies that build America and make it stronger--our families and our

businesses--and to make certain we have a new policy in Iraq which

really focuses on capturing Osama bin Laden, beating back the al-Qaida

wherever they are found--in Pakistan or Afghanistan--making America

safe from terrorism, and stopping what has been a longstanding and

negative impact of this President's policy in Iraq.

I yield the floor.