Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the subject of the

removal of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq and to address some of the

recent criticism regarding whether, given that large stockpiles of

weapons of mass destruction have not been found, action by the United

States was justified. When I have concluded, I know there are some

colleagues who will want to address this same question from slightly

different perspectives.

The tragic events of September 11, 2001, demonstrated with great

clarity that we can no longer afford to wait for threats to fully

emerge before we deal with them. We paid a heavy price that day for our

previous half-measures against those who hate us and want to destroy

us.

By definition, intelligence is imprecise, and no matter what reforms

we implement in our intelligence community, the fact is, at least to

some degree, it will always be uncertain. This is precisely why

intelligence information is just part of a larger puzzle, as it was in

the case of Iraq, that we used to determine the direction of U.S.

policy.

So given the uncertainty about weapons of mass destruction

stockpiles, were our actions in Iraq justified? The answer to that

question is most certainly yes. There is no doubt that the United

States, the Iraqi people, and the international community are far

better off today without Saddam Hussein in power.

The inability to find weapons of mass destruction stockpiles now does

not mean that Iraq did not have access to such weapons, and that under

Saddam Hussein Iraq was not a grave and gathering danger. In fact, the

overwhelming body of evidence, including most recently that from the

Iraq Survey Group, indicates that his regime did, indeed, pose a

threat, and that its removal will aid in our overall aid against

terror.

Some of our colleagues have charged that the President led the

American people to war under false pretenses; that the case for

removing Saddam Hussein's regime was supposedly based on an imminent

threat posed by that regime because of its arsenals of weapons of mass

destruction which now cannot be found. This assertion is categorically

false, and today I intend to explain why.

Let's briefly review how we arrived at the decision to authorize

force against Iraq in October of 2002.

Contrary to what some would have us believe, the Bush administration

did not fundamentally change U.S. policy with Iraq from that of the

Clinton administration. Upon entering office in January 2001, President

Bush inherited from the Clinton administration a policy of regime

change. I repeat, the Bush administration pursued the same Iraqi policy

as the Clinton administration. That policy was based on the 1998 Iraq

Liberation Act which stated:

This policy was unanimously approved by this Senate. This legislation

and, thus, the shift in U.S. policy from containment to regime change

reflected an acknowledgment that diplomatic solutions for dealing with

Saddam's intransigence were being exhausted.

Even before that shift, however, the Clinton administration was clear

about the nature and capabilities of Saddam

Hussein's regime and, moreover, believed that if left unchecked, the

regime would pose a serious threat in the future.

On February 17, 1998, as he prepared for war against Iraq, President

Clinton stated the following:

That quote was from President Clinton's remarks in 1998 as he

prepared for war against Iraq. He pointed out that the arsenal which

Iraq possessed--``a rogue state with weapons of mass destruction'' were

his exact words--will pose a threat because he can provide them to

terrorists, drug traffickers, or organized criminals who travel the

world among us unnoticed.

Note that he talked about weapons of mass destruction which Saddam

Hussein possessed.

I have noted no objections or caveats on these warnings by Democratic

Members of the Senate.

Later that year, not 2 months after President Clinton signed the

Iraqi Liberation Act into law, he delivered an address to the Nation

explaining his decision to order air strikes against Iraqi military

targets. He discussed the potential long-term threat posed by Saddam

Hussein. Again, I quote President Clinton:

Again, I note no dissent from Democratic Senators to these comments

of President Clinton.

Consider the striking similarity between these statements by

President Clinton and the statements Bush administration officials made

about Iraq during the lead up to Operation Iraqi Freedom. In the first

statement I cited from February of 1998, President Clinton discussed

the consequences of inaction in the face of continued noncompliance by

Saddam Hussein, noting that inaction would lead the dictator to

conclude the international community had lost its will.

Consider the statements of President George W. Bush to the United

Nations General Assembly in September 2002:

I point out the focus of President Clinton's statements was on the

totality of our knowledge about Saddam Hussein's history, his defiance

of the United Nations, use of chemical weapons, aggression against his

neighbors, savage treatment of his own people.

This is what we had to gauge his intentions by. This broad focus on

Saddam's past actions and known capabilities, not any particular piece

of intelligence, was also what prompted many Members of this body to

authorize force against Iraq in October 2002. Consider some of the

statements made in 2002 by my colleagues. First I quote Senator

Daschle, majority and minority leader:

Note: 2002, Saddam Hussein possesses weapons of mass destruction, no

qualifications except he is not the only country to do so. No

expression of doubts or caveats. As minority leader or majority leader,

Senator Daschle has access to all of the intelligence that is available

to anybody in this body.

Now I quote Senator Biden, whose comments I quote not just because he

is one of the more thoughtful Members of this body and ranking member

of the Foreign Relations Committee, but also because they happen to be

very close to the views I expressed on this issue. I quote Senator

Biden in his colorful way of putting it:

That is exactly true. That is precisely what happened.

Now let me quote another leader in the Senate, Senator Kerry, who

said this:

So this was the backdrop against which we all had voted to authorize

the President to act and upon which he acted. I should not say we all

voted to authorize the President because there were a few who did not,

but the vast majority of the House of Representatives and the Senate

voted to authorize the President to take appropriate action.

Some now are voicing second thoughts. Since our successful removal of

Saddam Hussein from power, it emerges that some of the intelligence

regarding the regime's weapons of mass destruction capabilities may

have been wrong, because most notably large stockpiles of chemical and

biological weapons have yet to be found.

I feel compelled to point out three obvious facts: One, an

intelligence failure is not synonymous with a misuse of intelligence.

Two, this intelligence issue does not fundamentally change the case

against Saddam Hussein. Three, since Iraq itself had provided

documentation to the United Nations on its production of chemical and

biological agents, the question is not whether but what happened to the

stockpiles.

Let's take the first, the misuse of intelligence. The fact remains

the Bush administration relied largely on the same intelligence

information used by the Clinton administration during the late 1990s,

the same information that was available to Senators and about which

they spoke on this floor, some of which I have quoted.

President Clinton's CIA Director was retained by President Bush. By

and large, the intelligence information was also the same as that of

the other allied intelligence services, with a primary source being the

two U.N. inspection bodies UNSCOM and UNMOVIC, the initials of which

are U-N-S-C-O-M and U-N-M-O-V-I-C, which were led by non-Americans,

such as Rolf Ekeus and Richard Butler. That Saddam had weapons of

mass destruction capabilities was widely accepted, even by those who

vehemently opposed the war. As French President Jacques Chirac

commented during an interview with ``Time'' Magazine in February of

2004:

I would note, if he does not have any weapons of mass destruction,

there is no point in talking about disarming him. The entire world

community believed he possessed these weapons, among other things

because he himself had said he did.

So given the information the international community had at the time,

the conclusions about Iraq's capabilities seemed clear. As former head

of the Iraqi Survey Group David Kay recently stated in his testimony to

the Senate Armed Services Committee:

I might add, that is exactly what President Bush said. That is

obviously a big-picture view.

It seems opponents of the President, in charging the administration

misled the American people, preferred to point to specific

intelligence. So let's take a closer look at a couple of those

examples. First, that the President's reference in his State of the

Union Address regarding Iraq's attempts to purchase uranium and,

second, that the administration presented intelligence community

information on Iraq's WMD capabilities as though it were an undeniable

fact rather than qualifying it properly with caveats.

First, there were the following 16 words in the President's State of

the Union Address:

Major newspapers, the Democratic National Committee, and some

policymakers claim this is one of the top examples of the Bush

administration knowingly misleading the American people and presenting

false intelligence information. As the DNC chairman Terry McAuliffe

stated:

That is a grave charge. Charges that the administration purposely

included false information in the President's speech I deem despicable,

an attempt to create a scandal where one does not exist. The President

had every reason to believe the information in his speech was true. It

had been vetted by the CIA Director and it was consistent with the

judgment of the intelligence community in October 2002. The National

Intelligence Estimate at that time said Iraq was ``vigorously trying to

procure uranium ore'' from several African countries.

The British government, which the President cited, included a

judgment in its dossier similar to that of the intelligence community's

majority judgment on this point.

In retrospect, Director Tenet stated this phrase, though factually

correct and approved in the interagency process, should not have been

included in the President's speech because it was not central to the

intelligence community's judgment that Iraq was reconstituting its

nuclear weapons program. In other words, it was just a piece of

evidence, not important enough to include in a speech like the State of

the Union speech, and certainly not what we relied upon for our

conclusion Iraq was trying to reconstitute its nuclear weapons program.

In any event, it does not suggest in any way that the President was at

fault for including the information, or that he had any intention of

misleading the American people. The President believed the text was

sound. It was not in error. If there was an error, it was simply

including a piece of information which really wasn't central to making

the case, but not misleading the American people.

Second, the President's critics argue he failed to mention caveats in

the intelligence community's assessment of Iraqi capability. This

criticism is highly misleading. According to the 2002 National

Intelligence Estimate, and I have an unclassified copy of it here, the

intelligence community had ``high confidence'' in the following

statements:

So the National Intelligence Estimate, prepared by the entire

intelligence community, led by the CIA Director George Tenet, had high

confidence, among other things, in the fact that Iraq possessed

proscribed biological and chemical weapons and missiles. After the fact

we found some of the missiles. We found the programs to make chemical

and biological weapons. But we don't find the big stockpile of those

weapons. It turns out the intelligence community's high confidence in

this statement was either misplaced or we simply haven't found the

material yet, or it went somewhere else. We don't know the answers to

those questions.

As to this, the only dissent came from the State Department. But even

in its alternate view it said Saddam continues to want nuclear weapons

and available evidence suggests Baghdad is pursuing a limited effort to

maintain and acquire nuclear weapons capabilities.

Moreover, it appears the State Department did not have significant

objections to the key judgments related to chemical, biological, and

missile programs.

So it is clear, it is fair to say, we had a general opinion of

Saddam's capabilities, that that is what the President addressed.

I want to also make it clear the President and the administration

never claimed Iraq posed an imminent threat, as some have said. To the

contrary, administration officials said the United States and the

international community needed to act before it became imminent.

Indeed, President Bush challenged those who wanted to wait until the

threat was imminent in his 2003 State of the Union Address, saying the

following:

So said President Bush.

Administration officials did use words like ``immediate'' and

``urgent'' but more to convey the importance of dealing with the threat

they judged to be growing; that they did not imply or state was

imminent, in other words, that the attack was about to occur. They did

not say that.

Indeed, that the threat was not yet imminent was well understood on

both sides of the aisle. As Senator Daschle, whom I quoted earlier,

stated in explaining his support for the resolution authorizing the use

of force against Iraq:

I submit he was correct. One can argue, and indeed some of my

colleagues have argued, administration officials were at times too

certain in the way they said it, too certain in their statements using

phrases like ``we know.'' But given all the information we had about

Saddam's history of using and producing weapons of mass destruction,

his aggressive intentions, and the intelligence community's high

confidence in the key areas of assessment, it is difficult to imagine

how the administration could have determined Iraq was not a threat that

needed to be dealt with immediately.

So, no, there may have been mistakes in intelligence. We have yet to

find that out. But there was not a misleading--an attempt to mislead by

the administration.

The second point is the larger point, that whatever deficiencies

there may have been about the stockpiles of weapons of mass

destruction, it doesn't change the basic case against Saddam Hussein.

Some of what I have quoted earlier makes that point. While it is

troubling our intelligence cannot tell us where these stockpiles are,

the larger case remains. The Bush administration, supported by a large

coalition, pursued a responsible policy, given all of the pieces of the

puzzle it had. As I said, there was Saddam's previously known missile

capabilities and chemical and biological weapons programs; his desire

to acquire a nuclear weapon; his continuing flagrant violation of

numerous Security Council resolutions; his history of aggression

including, I might add, shooting at American airplanes constantly in

the no-fly zone while we were trying to enforce that, if you will

recall; and even an attempt to assassinate former President Bush. Add

to this the regime's vast human rights

abuses which really only came to light after we were able to liberate

Iraq.

In other words, absent any statement or specific piece of

intelligence, the case against Saddam Hussein was already made by

Saddam Hussein himself and this was before, as I said, we found the

mass graves of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis.

Our colleague Senator Kerry summed it up well at the time. He said

this:

I want to quote that again:

There is no suggestion here we had to find weapons of mass

destruction, or even necessarily that we had to believe those weapons

existed at the time, even though, as I said, we all did, based upon the

intelligence at the time, but that this gross violation of human rights

was, in and of itself, a sufficient casus belli.

Given the same causes and information, what then accounts for the

differences between the actions of the Bush and Clinton

administrations? Very simply, the Bush administration made a decision

that, post 9/11, it was too dangerous to allow American security to

rest in the hands of an international organization that, after 12

years, had failed to enforce its own resolutions demanding Iraqi

compliance with the 1991 Gulf war cease-fire. It was too dangerous to

allow a regime to stay in place which had demonstrated a clear intent

to develop weapons of mass destruction, had ongoing ties to terrorist

organizations, and whose leader made it abundantly and routinely clear

the United States was his enemy.

We needed to begin the process of changing the facts on ground in the

Middle East.

In fact, it was, in part, the very uncertainty that made dealing with

Saddam Hussein an urgent matter.

As Senator Kerry explained before his vote in favor of the

authorization to use force:

While we have not and may not find these weapons stockpiles, the case

against Saddam Hussein is not diminished. His was a threat that needed

to be dealt with.

The third and final point, the jury is still out as to what happened

to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and when. It is an intelligence

failure--a lack of knowledge, not an attempt to mislead people--that we

don't know the answer to that question. Presumably, some day we will

find out or at least come closer to the resolution of the issue.

Perhaps some day we will find some of the weapons, or maybe we will

find evidence they were destroyed or removed before the war. There is

no way now to know.

But one fact is certain. What we know is that at one time Saddam

Hussein had chemical and biological weapons. Saddam Hussein admitted it

and the entire world believed it. What is more, that Saddam used those

weapons against Iran and against the Iraqi Kurds will remain forever

etched in our minds.

I point to simply one picture among many which we can present to

remind us of the fact that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass

destruction and used them--in this case, against his own people. Who

will forget the picture of this Kurdish mother with arms wrapped around

baby, both dead, as a result of Saddam Hussein's perfidy--the use of

his chemical weapons.

Mr. President, if we didn't agree on anything else--and

there were some issues we agreed on--all of the countries mentioned,

all of the intelligence services mentioned by the Senator from

Kentucky, in fact agreed on that point.

Among other things, they agreed because they read the documentation

provided to the United Nations by Saddam Hussein in which he admitted

he had biological and chemical weapons stockpiles. We knew he had used

them. He said he had them. The question now is, What happened to them

between sometime in the late 1990s, maybe right up to a week or two

before the Iraqi war, and the time we were able to go in after the

Iraqi war in search of them since we haven't yet found large

stockpiles? We found some things. We certainly found missiles. We have

found the programs to reconstitute the chemical weapons program and the

biological weapons program. But what we thought we were going to find

was a lot of artillery shells filled with chemical munitions and some

mortars and things of that sort. We thought they were going to be used

against our troops. That we haven't yet found. That is a mystery. You

can say it is an intelligence failure, but as the Senator from Kentucky

pointed out, nobody disagreed with the proposition that at one time he

had those weapons. There is a lot of evidence to that fact.

If there was an effort to mislead, there would have been a

lot of countries complicit and a lot of Senators complicit. I don't

believe for a minute that, in fact, any of us attempted to mislead;

that Jacques Chirac attempted to mislead, that the United Nations, or

President Bush attempted to mislead. We were all going forth with the

same intelligence. We all reached the same conclusion.

Maybe we don't know yet, but at some point in the last few months or

years Saddam Hussein buried, sent to Syria, blew up, or otherwise got

rid of those weapons. We just do not know. But about their existence at

one time, there can be no doubt.

I thank the Senator very much. The Senator made the last

point I wanted to make in this regard, and then I will conclude my

remarks.

We were briefed every day of the war at 9 o'clock in an area here in

which we can receive classified briefings by the general in charge of

the operation at the Pentagon and representatives of the CIA, the

Defense Department, State Department, and others. Every morning they

checked several boxes to remind us of the status of the open

relationship.

Before the operation started, they told us about their belief that

Saddam Hussein would lob artillery shells with chemical munitions at

our troops. They pointed out that they were going to make efforts to

try to prevent this from happening. They called it the ``red line''

around Baghdad. When we got that close, then there would be this threat

of chemical weapons fired against our troops--maybe biological.

So before the war, they began the bombardment on the command and

control systems that would send the orders out to the generals in the

field. They bombed artillery sites hoping to destroy their artillery

weapons. They bombed the warehouses where they thought the munitions

might be stored. They dropped millions of leaflets warning that if any

officer carried out an order to use these weapons against the allied

forces we would hold them accountable as war crime criminals.

As our troops got closer to that red line, they had to don the

equipment

that would protect them against these munitions. It was not easy to

fight under those conditions, but we believed this attack could very

well occur.

We got to the Baghdad Airport. By that briefing, the generals were

scratching their heads saying: We are not sure why, but we haven't been

attacked with these artillery shells. Yet maybe it is because we

destroyed the artillery units that would have fired them. Maybe they

just got scared because of our leaflets or they couldn't issue the

orders. We are not sure. But for some reason they didn't fire them. For

several days, they continued to wonder about that.

My point is this: At the highest levels, our troops and our leaders

at the Department of Defense all believed this was a threat that could

well materialize against our troops. They went to great lengths to try

to protect against it. This was not a matter of somebody misleading the

American people. We believed it, our troops believed it, the generals

believed it, and the Defense Department believed it. And, yes, the

President believed it. Nobody was trying to mislead anyone. We based a

lot of our actions on this belief.

Let me conclude my remarks by saying this: Much has been made of

David Kay's acknowledgment that all of the intelligence agencies

apparently were wrong about the weapons stockpiles. But listen to what

David Kay said as he reflected on the decision to go to war:

Kay stated on numerous occasions that Saddam Hussein was in clear

material breach of Security Council Resolution 1441. The Iraq Survey

Group, of which he was head, discovered hundreds of cases of activities

that were prohibited under the original United Nations cease-fire

resolution and that should have been but were not reported under

Resolution 1441.

The group found a prison laboratory complex which may have been used

in human testing of biological agents. It found ``reference strains''

of biological organisms which can be used to produce biological

weapons. It found new research on agents applicable to biological

weapons, including the Congo-Crimean hemorrhagic fever. It found

continuing research on ricin and aflatoxin. It also found plants and

advanced design work on new missiles with ranges well beyond what was

permitted.

Not just the words of Resolution 1441 but the entire credibility of

the U.N. was at stake. The years of Iraqi violations had to come to an

end. Now that awful and bloody regime has come to an end.

In the final analysis, whatever the inaccuracies of specific pieces

of intelligence, that Saddam Hussein continued to harbor intentions for

the development and use of WMD remains true. The observations of David

Kay, once again, showed this. He reported earlier this year that Iraq

``was in the early stages of renovating the nuclear program, building

new buildings.'' This is the regime that, as I said, David Kay called

``far more dangerous than even we thought. To wait any longer to remove

it would have been a gamble not worth taking.''

I yield to the Senator from Kentucky.

Madam President, I would answer the question this way: It is

easy for us, in this sort of antiseptic environment of the Senate, to

talk about these matters. But I was moved by the story of these Kurdish

doctors, who saw it with their own eyes. I cannot imagine how they

would not believe, and why we should not think it reasonable they would

believe, Saddam Hussein would do this again, that he had every

intention to, every capability of doing it again.

When I look at this picture, I think of the words of Secretary Powell

when he visited Halabja and saw what occurred there and basically vowed

the United States would never, ever again allow something like that to

happen if he could do anything about it. It made me proud. It made me

recommitted to the proposition that when we know something like that is

going on, or we believe it to be the case, like these Kurdish doctors

did, we have a duty to do something about it.

I absolutely agree with the Senator.

Madam President, I will answer in a couple of different

ways. First of all, I served on the Intelligence Committee for 8 years,

and I was convinced, based upon the intelligence estimates provided to

us over that period of time, these weapons were possessed, they had

been used, and they would likely be used again if he had the

opportunity to do so, and that there were weapons programs ongoing

within the country of Iraq. So I don't have any doubt, as the Senator

has so eloquently pointed out here, that the Kurds, who he referred to

and spoke with, were absolutely right that these kinds of attacks would

occur again.

I wondered whether I was alone in this and, of course, in looking, I

found that I was not. Let me note two or three things colleagues have

said. Then I will turn to Senator Hatch. But I note that in 1998, long

before President Bush came to town, President Clinton had come to the

same conclusion, based upon the intelligence that had been provided to

him by the intelligence agencies. A couple things struck me and then I

will move on. He said:

That is the point the leader made.

I also found it interesting that in December of 1998, in an Oval

Office address, President Clinton said this, and I take just one

sentence:

That was the President of the United States responding to the

intelligence he was given. I know some colleagues have said the current

administration hasn't qualified the intelligence enough. They have not

said we think or we judge. They said we are pretty sure. Here is

President Clinton staying, ``I have no doubt today.'' That is not

caveated or qualified.

Then several members of his cabinet--I looked at what they had to

say. Madeleine Albright, the distinguished Secretary of State, said:

That is her judgment.

Secretary of Defense William Cohen talked about Secretary Albright,

indicating Saddam Hussein has ``developed an arsenal of deadly chemical

and biological weapons. He has used these weapons repeatedly against

his own people as well as Iran.''

We are talking about an arsenal of weapons here. Here is the former

Secretary of Defense in the Clinton administration talking about that.

He went on to say in this particular interview, which occurred at Ohio

State University:

That is the picture Secretary Cohen at that time displayed on the

screen. He said:

VX is the nerve agent which is so deadly. As Dr. Frist knows, a

single drop can kill you within a couple of minutes.

Here is Secretary Cohen and Secretary Albright referring to the

United Nations believing that he still has a large quantity of this

product, the point being that everybody thought he had it.

The United Nations thought he had it, Secretary Cohen thought he had

it, Secretary Albright thought he had it, and President Clinton thought

he had it.

I found it interesting that Senator Leahy, the distinguished ranking

member on the Judiciary Committee, said in 1988--and he is right on

target:

That is a question we all asked.

The point is, a lot of our colleagues had no doubt and they said they

had no doubt.

Senator Kerry--I will make this the last quotation--in 1998 said:

Referring to WMD--

The bottom line is the distinguished majority leader is absolutely

correct. But not only do we have reason, not only did those Kurdish

physicians have reason to believe he had these horrible weapons and

would use them again, so did the leaders of our country, including the

leaders of the United Nations all throughout this period of time of

1996, 1998, right on up forward.

Unless the distinguished majority leader has anything else, I yield

at this point to the distinguished chairman of the Senate Judiciary

Committee.

Mr. President, let me summarize what I think has been

established during the last couple of hours. The reason we took to the

floor is because there has been a lot of criticism of the President of

the United States and the administration for its actions in finally

deciding that enough was enough with Saddam Hussein, that his continual

violation of the U.N. resolutions had to be enforced by someone, and

that before there was an imminent threat posed by his dangerous regime,

it was important for the United States and a coalition of other

countries to take action to remove him.

The criticism has come both from potential Democratic nominees for

President, Members of this body, news organizations, and others outside

the body, but we sought to try to put into perspective some of these

criticisms and to point out that at the end of the day, there should be

no question that President Bush did the right thing.

The three key points were, first, that an intelligence failure is not

the same thing as intelligence misuse or misleading, and if there was a

failure because the intelligence agencies were wrong about the

stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction that they thought existed and

which we have not been able to find, it is not the same thing as saying

that the President misled anyone or that anyone else with access to

intelligence misled anyone.

The second point was that whatever the state of intelligence, the

case for removing Saddam Hussein is still very strong, a point which

several of our colleagues have made repeatedly on both sides of the

aisle, as well as President Clinton and other members of his

administration prior to the Bush administration.

And, third, that the question regarding the weapons of mass

destruction, the stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons is not a

matter of whether they existed but what happened to them; that everyone

who had access to the intelligence was convinced they existed.

In fact, we know they existed at least one time because they were

used against the Kurds and against the Iranians. Saddam Hussein

himself, in submitting documents to the United Nations, admitted they

existed. This was, I believe, either 1996 or 1998 and then again in the

year 2002. So we had his admission that they existed. As Senator

Bennett said a while ago, nobody knows whether they were destroyed,

shipped someplace else, or whether we destroyed them, but eventually we

will find out the answers to those questions.

The fact we cannot find those weapons of mass destruction

stockpiles--primarily artillery shells with chemical munitions--does

not detract at all from the case against Saddam Hussein or make the

case that somehow or another the American people were somehow misled by

the President.

In closing, I will quote from the chairman of the Senate Intelligence

Committee and the ranking member of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

What the current ranking member of the Senate Intelligence Committee

had to say is: As the attacks of September 11 demonstrated, the immense

destructiveness of modern technology means we can no longer afford to

wait around for a smoking gun. I do believe that Iraq poses an imminent

threat, but I also believe after September 11 that question is

increasingly outdated. It is in the nature of these weapons and the way

they are targeted against civilian populations that documented

capability and demonstrated intent may be the only warning we get. To

insist on further evidence would put some of our fellow Americans at

risk. Can we afford to take that chance? We cannot.

The ranking member of the Senate Intelligence Committee is the junior

Senator from West Virginia, Mr. Rockefeller. These were his comments on

October 10, 2002. Yet today we find some saying the President contended

there was an imminent threat, when he did not, and that we should not

have acted unless, in fact, there was an imminent threat.

I think Senator Rockefeller was correct, and I know he has access to

all of the intelligence because, of course, he is the ranking member of

the Intelligence Committee.

Now I will read from the chairman of the Intelligence Committee: I

have seen enough evidence. I do not know if I have seen all the

evidence, but I have seen enough to be satisfied that there has been a

continuing effort by Saddam Hussein, since the end of the gulf war,

particularly since 1998, to reestablish and enhance Iraq's capacity of

weapons of mass destruction, chemical, biological, and nuclear.

That was the immediate past chairman of the Senate Intelligence

Committee, the senior Senator from Florida, Mr. Graham. He, too, had

access to all of the intelligence.

My point in quoting my two colleagues is that in the Senate, those of

us on the Intelligence Committee had access to the same intelligence

the President did, at least similar intelligence to what other

countries in the world had, and all of us, including the United States,

believed these things. We had the same intelligence that was given to

the President.

We were not misleading anyone. The President obviously was not

misleading anyone. The fact that it turns out some of the intelligence

turned out not to be totally correct is not the same thing as saying

somebody misused the intelligence. I hope my colleagues on the other

side do not cross that line of accusing the President of intentionally

misleading the American people because to do so, in effect, would be

also to accuse our own colleagues of that very same thing. I do not

believe, based upon what I know of my colleagues, that that could be

said of any one of them. So I hope we can get over this notion that

just because not all the intelligence was correct, therefore, it must

mean somebody was misleading someone else. I think we have established

that is not true and that it would be very wrong to try to pursue that

line of attack against President Bush simply because we happen to be in

an election year.

We will have more to say on this subject in the future, but I want my

colleagues to understand that if there are charges made against the

President or against this administration relating to the use of

intelligence with respect to the war in Iraq, those charges will be

rebutted. I appreciate very much the attention of my colleagues to this

matter this evening.