Mr. President, I wish to join the majority leader in

marking a solemn milestone in the war in Iraq. Three thousand five

hundred members of the armed services have died fighting in Iraq. Like

those before them who died serving their country, those 3,500 men and

women have served honorably. We are all indebted to them for their

courage and patriotism, as we are indebted to the 25,950 troops who

have been wounded.

It has been just under a year since the 2,500th U.S. service member

died in Iraq. With the toll of this war continuing to mount,

particularly since the President decided to escalate our involvement,

we must redouble our efforts to change course in Iraq. We owe it to the

troops serving in Iraq. These brave men and women signed up to defend

their country, not to police an Iraqi civil war. Many of these

individuals chose to join the Armed Forces as a result of the horrific

attacks of September 11. Yet they have found themselves fighting in a

country that had nothing to do with those attacks. As they endure

untold hardship in Iraq, al-Qaida and its extremist network are

rebuilding in Afghanistan, northern Africa and around the globe.

As I am sure my colleagues have done, I have been to the memorial

services honoring the dead, I have handed the wounded their Purple

Hearts, I have spoken to the parents whose children have returned from

war with brain injuries they will live with for the rest of their

lives. These experiences are a constant reminder of the responsibility

we have to the brave individuals who have volunteered to defend their

country. We have a duty to ensure that when they are asked to fight on

our behalf, it is not on the basis of false premises and shifting

rationales. We have a duty not to put them in harm's way when there is

no exit strategy. Most importantly, we have a duty to bring them home

because we know there is no military solution to the war they are

fighting.

We must help the Iraqi people rebuild their country and we must work

to build the broad international coalition that is needed to help bring

peace and stability to Iraq. But our service members in Iraq have been

asked to do the impossible--they have been asked to resolve political

and other differences by military force. The Congress has the power to

change this misguided policy by forcing the President to redeploy U.S.

troops. Measures that express the need for a policy shift, and concern

for the well-being of the troops, may be well-intended but they do not

go far enough and they will not help the troops. Only binding

legislation requiring redeployment will prevent further brave

service members from losing their lives for this administration's failed

and self-defeating policies.

Many soldiers serving in Iraq have written to me to express their

support for my efforts to end this war. It is with them in mind that I

will continue working to end this tragic mistake.