Mr. President, I will speak on the President's

decision to escalate by 21,000 troops into Iraq and whether it will be

effective. If we determine the likelihood of success is not going to be

effective, and we put 21,000 more troops in harm's way in the middle of

sectarian violence, then it doesn't seem to me to be a wise policy if

it is not going to be effective. It is naturally legitimate to debate

whether it is effective.

The President's plan specifically is among the 21,500 to take about

17,500 to put into Baghdad and another 4,000 into the western part of

Iraq, Anbar Province. I happen to agree with the latter part because I

was convinced by the Marine generals that an increase of our forces

would help them augment the success they have had, since all of that

area is almost entirely Sunni and the problem there has been al-Qaida

and

the al-Qaida insurgents. I agree with that part of the President's

strategy.

However, most of the troops--some 17,500--are scheduled to go into

Baghdad, in the midst of the sectarian violence, and that is where I

disagree. I point out to the Senate, the President's strategy is

predicated on the fact of the Iraqi Army being reliable. Now, will it

be reliable? If the President's strategy is predicated on that fact of

the Iraqi Army being reliable, one would think the administration has

come to the conclusion the Iraqi Army will be reliable. The fact is,

they haven't.

In testimony after testimony by administration witnesses, not one

witness in any of the hearings that have been held in the committees

upon which I have the privilege of serving--the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee, the Senate Committee on Armed Services, the Senate

Intelligence Committee--not one witness has been able to state that the

Iraqi Army will be reliable. To the contrary.

The Secretary of Defense, the new commander of American forces in

Iraq, the new combatant commander for the United States Central

Command--every one of them has been unable to answer in the affirmative

that the Iraqi forces are going to be reliable. As a matter of fact, a

few days ago the Secretary of Defense said to the Senate Committee on

Armed Services that we will have to wait and see if they are reliable.

The very underpinning of the President's strategy for success is an

unknown.

I bring to the Senate's attention what has been released 2 days ago.

This is the unclassified version of the National Intelligence Estimate.

This is the best estimate by our intelligence community. Listen to what

they have to say on exactly this subject. I am reading from the

unclassified version.

Despite real improvements, the Iraqi security forces,

particularly the Iraqi police, will be hard pressed in the

next 12 to 18 months to execute significantly increased

security responsibilities, and particularly to operate

independently against the Shia militias with success.

Sectarian divisions erode the dependability of many units.

Many are hampered by personnel and equipment shortfalls and a

number of Iraqi units have refused to serve outside of areas

where they have been recruited.

That is word for word the National Intelligence Estimate,

unclassified version, that says the same thing as Secretary Gates,

General Petraeus, Admiral Fallon, and the soon-to-be new Army Chief of

Staff, General Casey, who served for the last 2\1/2\ years in Iraq.

I come back to the question I continue to ask. If the President's

plan for success by an escalation of troops in Baghdad is predicated on

the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi security forces being reliable--since they

are to take the burden of the clearing and then the holding of an

area--and if no one can state they are reliable, why are we pursuing

this plan of an escalation of forces into Baghdad?

We hope they are going to be reliable. We hope for the success of our

forces. The stakes are high, unquestionably, of stabilizing Iraq. But

is this the wisest course, putting 17,500 more American forces in

Baghdad at high risk? In this Senator's opinion, the very underpinning,

the foundation of the President's plan, is undermined by virtue of the

fact that none of the administration principals can answer the question

that they are reliable. They can't answer that question. Therefore, I

do not think it is in the best interests of our country or of our

troops to escalate these forces into Baghdad.

I yield the floor.