Mr. President, yesterday we reached another tragic

milestone in Iraq. It seems it never stops. We lost five young American

soldiers. That means 2007 has been the deadliest year for our troops in

the entire war. In just a few months, we will be starting the sixth

year of this war. We have almost completed 5 years of the war. Our

thoughts have to be, as they should be, with the families of the five

latest American victims of the civil war in Iraq. Our hearts go out to

the families--several score have been Nevada families--a total of about

almost 3,900 now, young men and women who have lost their lives, and to

the more than 30,000 who have been gravely wounded.

This war has caused so much suffering in America where losses

continue to rise, not only in the loss of life and injury to our

valiant troops but our Treasury. The Joint Economic Committee is going

to come out with a report soon showing it to be in the trillions of

dollars this war has cost our country. That means our Treasury is going

to be depleted for generations to come.

No one doubts that our military is battered, scarred, and stretched

to the limit. And let's not forget about what is going on in Iraq. It

is estimated that 2 million people have left the country. This was a

country of about 25 million people when the invasion took place. We

learned today that 2.3 million civilians are now displaced, fleeing

from their homes, their neighborhoods, their schools, places of

worship. Violence is down, and certainly that is important and good,

but many of the experts are saying one reason the violence is down is

that so much ethnic cleansing has already taken place. It is true they

found 35 or 40 dead bodies today, and they are still finding them--not

to the amount they were finding before. They were finding more than 100

a day. Many of the areas have been ethnically cleansed.

Two-thirds of the displaced are children under the age of 12. This

humanitarian crisis rages with no end in sight. Two-thirds of the 2.3

million displaced are kids under 12. By the most critical benchmarks,

President Bush's flawed strategy on Iraq is making America not more

secure but less secure.

We are seeing no signs of meaningful progress on political

reconciliation, which is the key to success in Iraq. We have a civil

war going on with the Palestinians. Two factions are at war. We have

Lebanon, in effect, with an election that cannot be held because of

civil strife in that country. We have Iran which is causing trouble in

the whole region. And if a civil war in Iraq were not bad enough, now

we have 100,000 Turkish troops who have gathered on the northern

borders of Iraq.

Our brave troops, more than 160,000 of them, are giving everything

they have to this war. Far too many of them have been buried; far too

many face lives forever marred by physical and psychological wounds.

Yet for all of our troops' sacrifice and suffering, Iraqi politicians

are doing basically nothing. President Bush has said: As they step up,

we stand down. They have not stepped up.

What better reminder do we need than the crisis in Pakistan that the

world can change overnight? It is time to rebuild our military to

refocus on the war on terror and the grave challenges that face us

throughout the globe, not just in Iraq. We must repair the readiness of

the Army and Marine Corps, the finest fighting force in the world, but

a force that is under great strain. One only need look at the leader of

the Army, General Casey. He is saying that right now, and he has

testified under oath to that effect. We must be prepared to respond to

new challenges. We must have the strength and flexibility to promote

freedom and defend human rights when they are attacked. We must refocus

our efforts on bin Laden and al-Qaida who threaten our safety, and it

is long past time to give our troops the hero's welcome they so bravely

earned. They need to come home.

After years of the Republican underfunding of veterans' care,

Democrats have provided $4 billion above the President's request to

make this failure right. President Bush remains obstinate. His allies

in Congress have remained loyal. They have blocked our efforts so far,

but we will continue fighting to give our troops and all Americans the

new course in Iraq they deserve.