Mr. President, let me say this. Ambassador Negroponte came

to the Senate the last time this past May. Did he talk anything about

what was going on with intelligence in Iraq or what was going on in

Iraq, period? No. He talked about international terrorism. It is not as

if we have been bothering the Ambassador having him come here all the

time.

But I am disappointed to have to report to the American people this

is what is going on with this administration: You never get to what the

issue is. Put it off. Do not talk about it. Stay the course.

In Iraq we have some problems: almost 2,000 dead Americans; 15,000,

16,000 wounded, many of them very badly.

I in no way say this to disparage the managers of this bill, one of

whom is a winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor, Senator Dan

Inouye; the other served valiantly in World War II as a pilot. But

their job would be much easier if they had a Defense authorization bill

prior to coming here to this floor with an appropriations bill. It

makes their job, if not impossible, extremely difficult.

Let me explain what I am talking about. You authorize funding in the

Congress, and then it goes to the all-important Appropriations

Committee, and they determine what of the authorization bill deserves

money. That is basically what it amounts to. There has to be some limit

to spending, and that is what the Appropriation Committee's job is; to

determine whether the money should be spent.

Well, here there is no authorization bill. There is legislation in

the authorization bill that deals with retirement pay for the military,

with pay raises for the military, with all kinds of programs for the

veterans, the National Guard and Reserve. The Appropriations Committee

does not have the benefit of that. They will be working, in effect, on

last year's law.

I do not know how we could ever--I am sure it has happened sometime

in the far distant past. I am sure it has happened. I hope it does not

happen in the future that they try to do this jury-rigged system, where

you take an appropriations bill without having done an authorization

bill.

There are matters in that authorization bill dealing with prisoner

abuse. A number of people want to offer amendments. They cannot offer

an amendment on the appropriations bill dealing with prisoner abuse.

I see my friend, the Senator from South Carolina, in the Chamber, the

mover of the legislation to have a look at what has gone on in Abu

Ghraib and other prison facilities the military has. I think the author

of the bill, Senator McCain from Arizona, may have a little bit of

expertise on prisoner of war abuse. I think he may have a little bit of

authenticity when he comes before the Senate and says he wants to take

a look at that.

John McCain spent years of his life in a prison camp in Vietnam, not

days, weeks, months but years--try 5\1/2\ years--most of it in solitary

confinement. So he wants to offer an amendment. He cannot do it unless

he gets unanimous consent that he can have a vote on it. He can offer

it, but it falls similar to everything else. But I will bet he is going

to get unanimous consent because we want him to be able to debate this

issue. Who has more standing than the Senator from Arizona to raise

this as an issue?

Mr. President, we--I repeat--had a scheduled briefing at 3 o'clock

today to find out what is going on in Iraq dealing with intelligence.

We have never, ever had a briefing by Negroponte since he has assumed

his duties as head of the so-called DNI on April 21 of this year. We

have not been briefed by him on Iraq since he assumed his position. So

I do not think we are being greedy taking an hour of his time.

Ducking debates about our national defense has become too topical and

typical in this country because we are unable to bring matters before

this floor. No amendments, no votes, no debates--that is not the way to

do a bill in the Senate.

Why didn't we finish the Defense authorization bill the first time?

Because we went to gun liability. So this process is unacceptable. We

are a nation at war. We have troops in Iraq, in Afghanistan. We have an

opportunity to have an open, honest debate about our national defense.

Our troops and the American people deserve better, and that is not

what we are having here. And the distinguished majority leader said he

was offended because I asked for a briefing by the Intelligence

Director of this country. Offended? I am sorry he is offended.