Mr. President, this morning in the Armed Services

Committee, Secretary Rumsfeld and Generals Myers, Casey, and Abizaid

briefed us on the status of the war effort.

Secretary Rumsfeld said, once again, that it is a tough road ahead

but that we must persevere and he sees reasons to be hopeful. Secretary

Rumsfeld was describing a different war than most persons are concerned

about. The war in Iraq they see is one of mistake after mistake after

mistake. Whatever our position on the Iraq war, we should all be

concerned that the administration has not handled it competently.

Secretary Rumsfeld needs to see what the American people see very

clearly: The President does not have a winning strategy in Iraq. Our

troops have been asked to do more with less. Our current strategy isn't

working and the Congress and the American people know it.

Secretary Rumsfeld insists today that it is false to say the

administration is painting a rosy picture. But that is exactly what he

continues to do. It is time for Secretary Rumsfeld to take off his

rose-colored glasses and admit to the American people and to our men

and women in uniform who are paying the price with their lives for its

failures that he had no realistic strategy for success.

It is time to level with the American people instead of continuing to

paint an optimistic picture that has no basis in reality because of his

failed strategy. And it is time for Secretary Rumsfeld to resign.

Despite the elections last January and the formation of a new

transitional Iraqi government, many are increasingly concerned that the

administration has no effective or realistic plan to stabilize Iraq. It

continues to underestimate the strength and the deadly resilience of

the Iraqi insurgency and it has failed shamefully to adequately protect

our troops. More than 1,700 American service men and women have been

killed in Iraq so far and over 13,000 more have been wounded. The

families of these courageous soldiers know all too well that the

insurgents are not desperate or dead-enders or in their last throes, as

administration officials have repeatedly claimed.

Instead, General Casey indicated that the insurgency is around 26,000

strong, an increase over the 5,000 the Pentagon believed were part of

the insurgency 1 year ago.

As General Myers said in April, the capacity of the insurgents ``is

where they were almost a year ago.'' General Abizaid told the committee

today that the overall strength of the insurgency is ``about the same

as it was'' 6 months ago. Looking ahead, as General Vines said this

week, ``I'm assuming that the insurgency will remain at about its

current level.''

In the last 2 months, America has lost an average of three soldiers a

day in Iraq, and no end is in sight. As General Myers said on May 12.

Because of the war, our military has been stretched to the breaking

point.

The Department of Defense has had to activate a stop-loss policy, to

prevent service members from leaving the military as soon as they

fulfill their commitment.

Nearly 50 percent of the persons serving in the regular Armed Forces

have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan since December 2001, and

nearly 15 percent of them have been deployed more than once.

Thirty six percent of all those serving in the Armed Forces,

including in the National Guard and the Reserves, have been deployed to

Iraq or Afghanistan of since December of 2001.

The alarm bell about the excessive strain on our forces has been

ringing for at least a year and a half. In January 2004, LTG John Riggs

said it bluntly:

As LTG James Helmley, head of the Army Reserve, warned at the end of

2004, the Army Reserve ``is rapidly degenerating into a `broken'

force'' and is ``in grave danger of being unable to meet other

operational requirements.''

These continuing deployments are taking their toll not only on our

forces in the field but also on their families here at home. The

divorce rate in the active-duty military has increased 40 percent since

2000.

The war in Iraq and the casualties and the strain on families have

seriously undermined the Pentagon's ability to attract new recruits and

retain members already serving. Both the Regular and Reserve components

of the Armed Forces are increasingly unable to meet recruitment goals.

MG Michael Rochelle, head of the Army Recruiting Command, stated the

problem succinctly in May when he said that this year is ``the toughest

recruiting climate ever faced by the all-volunteer Army.''

In March, the Pentagon announced it was raising the maximum age for

Army National Guard recruits from 34 to 39, and was also offering

generous new health benefits for Guard and Reserve members activated

after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Despite these facts, Secretary Rumsfeld insisted today that we will

not have a broken Army as a result of the war.

The severe strain the war is placing on our Armed Forces and on our

ability to protect our national security interests in other parts of

the world concerns us all.

The Army has been forced to go to all-time new lengths to fill its

ranks. In May, it began offering a 15-month active duty enlistment, the

shortest enlistment tour in the history of the Army.

To recruit and retain more soldiers, the National Guard has increased

its retention bonus from $5,000 to $15,000. The first-time signing

bonus has gone up from $6,000 to $10,000. GEN Steven Blum, Chief of the

Army National Guard, said:

We all know that these problems of recruiting and retention cannot be

fixed through enlistment bonuses, health benefits, and raising the age

of service. These are short-term Band-Aids on the much larger problem

of the war. Only progress in bringing the war to an honorable

conclusion will lead to a long-term solution to the problem which is

clearly undermining our ability to respond to crises elsewhere in the

world.

Despite claims by the administration of progress, Iraq is far from

stable and secure. We have made very little progress on security since

sovereignty was transferred to the interim Iraqi Government 1 year ago.

Today, Secretary Rumsfeld insisted we are not stuck in a quagmire in

Iraq. He insisted that ``the idea that what's happening over there is a

quagmire is so fundamentally inconsistent with the facts.'' What planet

is he on? Perhaps he is still living in the ``Mission Accomplished''

world.

By last June, 852 American service members had been killed in action.

Today, the number has doubled to more than 1,700.

By last June, 5,000 American service members had been wounded in

action. Today, the number has more than doubled, to over 13,000.

DIA Director Admiral Jacoby told the Armed Services Committee in

March that:

Just last week, General Pace said:

A year ago, the United States had 34 coalition partners in Iraq. Nine

of those partners have pulled out in the past year. Today, we have just

25. By the end of the year, another five countries that are among the

largest contributors of troops are scheduled to pull out.

One year ago, 140,000 American troops were serving in Iraq. Today, we

have the same number of troops.

The training of the Iraqi security forces continues to falter. The

administration still has not given the American people a straight

answer about how many Iraqi security forces are adequately trained and

equipped. They continue to overestimate the number of Iraqis actually

able to fight. In the words of the General Accounting Office:

In February last year, Secretary Rumsfeld preposterously said:

In fact, the numbers of Iraqis who are adequately trained is far, far

lower. As General Meyers conceded a year later, only about 40,000 Iraqi

security forces ``can go anywhere and do anything.''

It is still far from clear how many Iraqi forces are actually capable

of fighting without American help and assistance.

Our reconstruction effort has faltered as well over the last year--

and faltered badly. The misery index in Iraq continues to rise. As of

June 15, only $6 billion--one third--of the $18 billion provided by

Congress last summer for Iraq reconstruction had been spent.

The Iraqi people desperately need jobs. But we are unable to spend

funds quickly, because the security situation is so dire. Of the amount

we do spend, it is far from clear how much is actually creating jobs

and improving the quality of life. We need greater focus on small

projects to create jobs for Iraqis, not huge grants to multinational

corporations that create more profits for corporate executives than

stability in Iraq.

By the State Department's own accounting, up to 15 percent of

reconstruction funding is being used to provide security for the

reconstruction. That estimate itself may be too low. A Department of

Energy analysis this month says that perhaps 40 percent or more is

actually being spent on security, as opposed to actual reconstruction.

These costs have increased--not decreased--over the past year as

insurgent attacks have continued to escalate. We are spending ever-

increasing amounts of assistance on security to guard against an

insurgency that the Vice President insists is in its last throes.

A joint survey by the United Nations Development Program and the

Iraqi Government released last month shows Iraq is suffering from high

unemployment, widespread poverty, deteriorating infrastructure, and

unreliable water, sewage, sanitation, and electricity services--despite

its immense oil wealth and access to water.

Estimates of the number of unemployed range between 20 and 50 percent

of the population. Every unemployed person is ripe for recruiting by

the insurgents, who offer as little as $50 a person for those willing

to plant explosives on a highway or shoot a policeman.

Iraq still suffers heavily from severe electricity shortages.

According to the Department of Energy assessment, the causes are

numerous, ``including sabotage, looting, lack of security for workers,

disruptions in fuel supplies . . .''

A year ago, Iraqis had an average of 12 hours of electricity per day.

Today, they have just over 10 hours a day.

Almost all of Baghdad's households suffer from an unstable supply. In

parts of the city, electricity is turned on for 3 hours and then turned

off for 3 hours. As a result, 29 percent rely on private generators for

electricity. In areas with high incidences of poverty, many families

have no alternative supply to turn to.

Water and sanitation are enormous problems as well. Just this week,

water was unavailable in many parts of Baghdad because insurgents blew

up the water pipes.

According to the United Nations Development Program, only 54 percent

of families in Iraq have safe drinking water, and 80 percent of

families in rural areas use unsafe drinking water.

What happened to all of the oil that was supposed to pay for the

costs of reconstruction and drive the recovery of Iraq's economy? Last

year, the Iraqi Oil Minister said that 642 attacks on the oil system

had cost the economy $10 billion. In 2005, pipelines are still under

attack, and analysts believe it will be 2 to 3 years before Iraq is

able to increase its oil production.

The administration has been consistently wrong about Iraq. They

wrongly insisted there was no guerilla war. They repeatedly--and

wrongly--called the insurgents dead-enders who are in their last

throes. They repeatedly--and wrongly--sent our service men and women on

patrol without proper armor, a shortage that continues with the marines

even today. When Secretary Rumsfeld was challenged about it by a

soldier, to huge applause from the troops, on the Secretary's visit to

Iraq last December, he responded:

That response from the troops says it all. Surely, no Secretary of

War or Secretary of Defense in our history has ever been so humiliated

by his troops or received such a resounding vote of no confidence.

The Secretary's failed strategy has created an impossible situation

for our forces. The administration has undermined our national security

and undermined our ability to protect our national security interests

elsewhere in the world.

Our colleague, Senator Hagel, summed it up brilliantly when he told

U.S. News and World Report last week:

Mr. President, next Tuesday marks the 1-year anniversary of the

transfer of sovereignty in Iraq, and to mark the occasion, President

Bush will address the Nation.

When he does, all of us hope that he will state a new, more realistic

and more effective strategy for the United States to succeed in Iraq.

The war has clearly made America less safe in the world. It has

strengthened support for al-Qaida and made it harder to win the real

war against terrorism--the war against al-Qaida.

The President needs an effective strategy to accelerate the training

of a capable Iraqi security force.

The President needs an effective strategy to rescue the faltering

reconstruction effort and create jobs and hope for the Iraqi people,

and neutralize the temptation to join the insurgents.

The President needs an effective strategy for serious diplomacy to

bring

the international community into Iraq, to support the adoption of a

constitution that protects all the people of Iraq.

He needs an effective strategy to repair the damage the war has

caused to our reputation in the world and to our military. Our men and

women in uniform deserve no less.

We are muddling through day by day, hoping for the best, and fearing

the worst. Our men and women in uniform deserve better--and so do the

American people.