Madam President, I have three or four comments I want

to make this morning. Most importantly, I want to say a word about the

new leadership in Iraq.

In a delegation led by the Democratic leader, Senator Reid of Nevada,

seven of us were in Iraq, in Baghdad, about 10 days ago. We met with

two of the three new leaders who have been chosen. Mr. al-Hasani, the

new speaker, a Sunni, spent some time with us. We spent an hour with

Dr. al-Jaafari who, just an hour ago, was named the new Prime Minister

of Iraq, and who will be the most important leader we will be dealing

with.

I believe our delegation was one of the first from the Senate to

spend that much time with the new leader of Iraq. I want to report that

I was most impressed with what we saw there. We met a man in his late

fifties, who had been in exile from Iraq for a number of years because

of the brutality of Saddam Hussein. He is a physician. It seems as

though physicians are ascending in all sorts of different places,

including in the U.S. Senate and in Iraq. He is a well-educated man and

conducted our discussion in English. He showed in his presence a great

deal of calm. He is not a quiet man, but he is a calm man who seems to

know exactly what he believes and what he thinks.

I was taken with the fact that he began his discussion with us with

about a 5-minute monolog about the brutality of Saddam Hussein. He said

he was ``worse than Hitler, worse than Stalin.'' Those were his words.

He said Hussein had murdered a million people in 35 years. In his

words, al-Jaafari said ``he had buried 300,000 people alive.'' He said

that quietly, but he obviously feels that very deeply.

Second, I was most impressed with his understanding of U.S. history.

We talked about the difficulty of creating a democracy and how we are

expecting them to create a constitution by August. In our situation,

years ago, it took us 12 years from the time of the Declaration of

Independence to the time of our Constitution. Our Founders locked the

news media out for 6 months while they did that. Today, we are

expecting the Iraqis to come together--people of different

backgrounds--and have a constitution by August, while we watch and

criticize on 24/7 television everything they do.

He has a good understanding of U.S. history and, I thought, a great

appreciation for democracy and freedom. He showed not only no

resentment about the American presence in Iraq, he showed great

gratitude for the American presence in Iraq. He wants us to stay there

for a while, so that there is enough security for their constitutional

government to form. He seemed very comfortable with that.

Finally, he is a brave man--brave during exile, brave today. There

may be only a few thousand people in Iraq--a country the size of

California with 25 million people--who are causing all the trouble, but

they are making it a dangerous place to be. Even the Green Zone and the

areas around it are not entirely safe.

So we have a sophisticated, English-speaking, well-educated, U.S.-

history-knowing, brave man, who is the new leader of Iraq, a man who is

grateful for the American presence and who is determined to help create

a democracy. I congratulate the Iraqi people on the substantial

achievement.

Also, Mr. al-Hasani, the new speaker, a Sunni--the new Prime Minister

is a Shiite--was very impressive to us in the Senate delegation. He, as

well as the Prime Minister, wore western clothing in these meetings. I

say this as a fact, not as a judgment.

Mr. al-Hasani was educated in the U.S. at two major universities. He

lived in Los Angeles during his exile. He created a business in Los

Angeles. He went back to Iraq to help create a new democracy. He is

also a sophisticated person with a strong knowledge of freedom and

democracy, a strong appreciation of the United States, and he is also a

brave man to be undertaking this. I congratulate the Iraqis for that.