Mr. President, last evening, during his press conference

with Prime Minister Blair relative to Iraq, President Bush stated:

I hope that is not overly optimistic, but, frankly, I am afraid that

it is because of the incompleteness of the Iraqi Government. Its two

most important positions--the Minister of Defense and the Minister of

the Interior--have not been filled. These are critical positions

because numerous police and army units have been dominated by militia

members who are loyal to sectarian or political leaders and not to the

central Government, and because many militia members outside the police

and the army are engaged in a rampage against innocent civilians.

While there have been disagreements on a number of issues related to

Iraq, almost everyone has agreed that the new Iraqi Government would

have to be a government of national unity with specific emphasis on

independent nonsectarian choices for the positions of Minister of

Defense and Minister of the Interior if there was to be a chance of

quelling the sectarian violence and defeating the insurgency.

Our senior military leaders have been telling us for years that there

is no military solution to the violence in Iraq and no way to defeat

the insurgency without a political solution among the Iraqis

themselves.

The Government that was announced last weekend and approved by the

Iraqi Council of Representatives does not represent a political

solution because it did not include the two most important ministries:

the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior.

The plain truth is that the various Iraqi political actors were not

willing to make the compromises necessary to bring about a government

of national unity within the time allotted by the Iraqi Constitution.

And they still haven't. We hope they will at any time, but they still

haven't.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, appearing on FOX News last

Sunday, minimized the lack of selections for these two positions when

she said:

She went on to say:

On ``Meet the Press'' that afternoon, Secretary Rice even spoke of

that failure as a plus, a positive, saying:

How is that a sign of maturity? In my view, both the mature and the

necessary thing under the constitution of Iraq was for the Iraqi

political leaders to make the compromises necessary to form the entire

Government, including, in particular, the Minister of Defense and the

Minister of the Interior, the two most important ministries.

It was also disappointing that neither President Bush nor our

Secretary of State mentioned anything about the need to amend the Iraqi

Constitution. General Casey noted in testimony before the Senate Armed

Services Committee:

The Iraqi Constitution itself provides for the appointment of a

committee to propose amendments to their constitution. That committee

has 4 months to complete its work and to recommend amendments to the

constitution to the full Parliament.

For a long time, I have been calling for President Bush and officials

of his administration to put pressure on the Iraqis, to meet the

timetables they have set in their own constitution to form a unity

government and to make the changes in the constitution that would make

it a unifying document. I have called for that pressure to be in the

form of conditioning our continued presence in Iraq on Iraqis meeting

their self-imposed deadlines.

The President told me in the presence of several Members of the

Congress and in the presence of his own security team that position is

actually helpful. For us to tell the Iraqis that our continued presence

depends upon their doing what only they can do, which is to meet their

self-imposed deadlines for a full government to be appointed and for

them to amend their constitution to make it a unifying document.

These are critically important matters. There needs to be a

government of national unity. We can't save Iraqis from themselves. We

can't form a government of national unity. We can't amend their

constitution. If they want a nation, it is up to them to get on with it

according to their own constitutional deadlines.

It is not going to happen if we just tell the Iraqis we are there as

long as they need us. That is an open-ended commitment which cannot

stand because the American people will not stand for it and should not

stand for it.

I hope the President and the Secretary of State and the U.S.

Ambassador are saying privately what they haven't yet said publicly:

that it is up to the Iraqis to determine their fate and to pull

together a national unity government because that is the only hope they

have of defeating the insurgency and avoiding civil war.