Mr. President, the question that should be before the

Senate is: Do you support the President's escalation of the war? Don't

confuse it. Don't obfuscate it. Let's have a clean vote. The only

charade that is being played is by those who do not want to have a

clean vote on this most fundamental question.

As a Senator, John F. Kennedy wrote a Pulitzer Prize-winning book

titled ``Profiles in Courage.'' His book told the stories of eight

Senators from both sides of the aisle who took a stand based on

principle and risked their careers to do so. Today, almost 50 years

later, I believe we, too, must take a stand based on principle. Today,

I believe all of us who walk on the same floor where Senator John

Kennedy once stood should heed his words when he said:

Today is an opportunity for every Member of the Senate to be a

profile in courage. Frankly, I am disappointed in my Senate colleagues

who voted against debating Senator Warner's resolution on Iraq. With

their vote, all they have done is delay honest debate on a failed

foreign policy that has been misguided since the beginning. I don't

believe this Senate should turn its back on the American people and

cast their lot with the President in his escalation of the war in Iraq.

I believe those who support the President's ill-

advised plan should be willing to stand behind that principle and go on

record, rather than hide behind parliamentary maneuvers to avoid a

vote.

Our colleagues should not be running interference for the President

on the floor of the Senate. In fact, I never supported the

administration's war--a war of choice, not of necessity; a war based on

fiction, not on fact; a war fought without enough troops from the very

beginning and designed with no plan to win the peace. I didn't vote for

the war, and I certainly would not vote for an escalation of the war.

I was in the minority when I voted against the war in 2002. I was in

the minority, again, when I voted last year to transition and bring our

troops home over a period of time. But the majority of the American

people sent a clear message this last November. They said the

President's plan for the Iraq war has failed. The American people

elected the Senate and this Congress to change the course in Iraq. It

is about time we started listening because it is clear the President

has not. He didn't listen to his generals. He didn't listen to the Iraq

Study Group. He didn't listen to anyone who disagreed with him. And he

certainly has not listened to the American people. That is the only

explanation for an Iraq plan that is simply more of the same.

As one of the witnesses before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

said:

The President's escalation plan will not work. Look at the news over

the past few days as the first wave of the new escalation troops has

arrived. At least 130 people were killed and over 300 wounded on

Sunday, in the deadliest single bomb blast since the U.S. invasion

almost 4 years ago. The U.S. military tells us that the four U.S.

helicopters that have crashed in the past 2 weeks were actually shot

down, with a fifth one down today. And Iraqi insurgents are using new

tactics to shoot down our helicopters. The Brookings Institute says the

number of daily attacks by insurgents and militias has gone from

approximately 32 in November of 2003 to 185 in November of 2006, with

Iraqi civilian deaths going from 1,250 to 4,000 in that same period.

Michael O'Hanlon, an expert from Brookings, said that Iraq has become

``one of the 3 or 4 most violent places on earth.'' And this escalation

and violence has happened while U.S. troops were there and in spite of

previous U.S. troop surges. You only have to look to the past to see

that the President's escalation plan will not work. In fact, this

escalation plan is based on false assumptions and failed ideas.

To quote one of the witnesses who testified before the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee recently:

The escalation plan will not work because it depends on Prime

Minister Maliki to do the right thing. The Associated Press reported

today that the ``long-awaited security drive'' is underway. ``The

implementation of the prime minister's plan has already begun,'' said a

military spokesman. Yet even the architect of the escalation plan for

the administration, General Keane, told the Senate Foreign Relations

Committee that he doesn't know if we can count on the Prime Minister,

and he admits that Prime Minister Maliki is an unknown quantity.

I don't know and certainly don't believe that we should put the lives

of the sons and daughters of America on the line based on the hope--the

hope--that Maliki will do the right thing. The escalation plan will not

work because it depends upon Iraqis, we are told by the administration,

to take the lead. The administration keeps saying that is an Iraqi

plan, with the Iraqis taking the lead. But the truth is, everyone

doubts that the Iraqi troops will actually show up.

Many of the troops Prime Minister Maliki promised will be Kurds. Yet

an NPR story quotes General Dennis Chapman, who is commander of a team

of American military advisers in Iraqi Kurdistan, saying that there

have already been desertions from Kurdish troops and that out of the

battalion of 1,600 Kurdish soldiers going to Baghdad, he only expects a

few hundred to report for duty.

Over and over again, we heard from experts testifying before the

Senate Foreign Relations Committee that there simply aren't enough

Iraqi troops who are loyal to Iraq as a nation and to Maliki as Prime

Minister.

A recent New York Times article painted a frightening picture of what

a joint American-Iraqi patrol looks like. The article highlights the

lack of troop strength and training of Iraqi forces and the confusion

that comes with having underprepared Iraqi troops take the lead. To

quote from the article:

In the article, a lieutenant colonel of the Third Stryker Brigade

Combat Team talked about the difficulty of conducting such operations.

He said:

The escalation plan will not work because similar escalation plans

have already failed in Iraq, when the enemy simply waited us out. We

tried a troop escalation and it didn't work, when we sent 12,000 troops

to Baghdad last summer and death and violence on the streets of Baghdad

actually increased. The escalation plan will not work because it has

benchmarks but no consequences. And benchmarks without consequences are

just aspirations. The plan doesn't hold the Iraqis accountable. We have

seen countless plans from this administration with benchmarks after

benchmarks that are never met.

The Iraq Study Group said, in recommendation 21, that if the Iraqi

Government doesn't make progress toward milestones, ``the United States

should reduce its political, military, or economic support for the

Iraqi government.''

Yet when I asked Secretary Rice what would happen if the Iraqis

failed to meet the much-heralded benchmarks, she didn't list any

consequences. Instead she told me:

Plan A hasn't been working. I will say it again: Benchmarks without

consequences are just aspirations. And they are aspirations that have

failed time and time again. The escalation plan, as a consequence, will

break the back of our National Guard and Reserves.

Let me be clear: The President's escalation plan cannot be

implemented without using the National Guard and Reserves far beyond

what they already have been used. There simply aren't enough troops. We

have already seen the tours of National Guard troops extended. A week

ago, I was informed that the New Jersey Army National Guard troops

currently stationed in Iraq will see their tours extended by 125 days

as result of President Bush's policy. I fully expect to see more

extended deployments in the future.

The escalation is going to hurt our security at home by keeping those

National Guard and Reserve troops away in Iraq. Those who return home

leave their equipment in Iraq, resulting in severe equipment shortages

for our National Guard at home. In fact, Larry Korb, an expert from the

Center for American Progress, says the units returned home so depleted

that the Marines have been referring to this phase as ``the

postdeployment death spiral.'' That is why it is time to transition our

mission and set a timeframe to get our troops out of Iraq.

Staying in Iraq isn't in the national interest or national security

interest of the United States. Our troops are caught in the middle of a

civil war they can't solve. Increasing troops will only put more of

them directly into a sectarian Iraqi fight. Keeping our troops there or

adding more troops is trying to solve a political problem with a

military solution.

In one briefing, General Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,

said: We need to get the Iraqis to love their children more than they

hate their neighbors.

That is a powerful truism. The problem is, you don't get Iraqis to

love

their children more than they hate their neighbors through military

might. That is about reconciliation. It is about confidence building.

It is about power sharing. It is about revenue sharing. It is about a

host of other things, things that cannot be accomplished through

military might.

Staying would only continue to empower and embolden Iran, a country

that has turned out to be the biggest winner in our war with Iraq. Dr.

Paul Pillar pointed out recently:

Our presence in Iraq only continues to serve as a battle cry for

terrorists around the world. According to last year's National

Intelligence Estimate on international terrorism, the war in Iraq has

become ``a cause celebre'' for jihadists'' and is ``shaping a new

generation of terrorist leaders and operatives.''

Let me be clear, because of how this war was entered into--weapons of

mass destruction that never existed--because of how it was executed,

there are now no good options left for us in Iraq. But I do believe the

first steps toward stabilizing Iraq is to set a date certain for troops

to leave. It is only by setting a date certain for our troops to leave

that Iraqis will have to take responsibility for security in their own

country and work out their political power struggles. Right now as much

as they dislike us being there, we still bear the true burden for

trying to stop the violence. The Iraqis have little incentive to work

out their turf wars over political power as long as we are in the

country. Iraq's political leadership will never make the hard choices,

compromises, and negotiations necessary to achieve a government of

national unity, as long as they believe we will stay in an endless

occupation, in which the lives of Americans will be shed and national

treasure will be expended.

It is only by setting a date certain for our troops to leave that

Iraq's neighbors will start to take responsibility for ending the chaos

inside Iraq. Right now the violence has not reached the tipping point

to get Iraq's neighbors involved. Ultimately, it is not in their

national security interest to have the conflict spill across their

borders and to have Iraq disintegrate. But by setting a date certain to

leave, we create a new incentive for Iraq's neighbors to help quell the

violence. It is only by setting a date certain for our troops to leave

that the international community will take a responsible role in Iraq.

Right now the international community sees this as America's war. Once

we make clear we will not be there permanently, they, too, will have an

incentive to get involved and help preserve stability in a region much

closer to Europe than the United States.

So by setting a date certain for our troops to leave, we actually

motivate the Iraqis, Iraq's neighbors, and the international community

to take the necessary steps to stabilize Iraq.

But setting a date certain and getting our troops out of Iraq in a

safe and orderly way is not enough. I believe we must do more.

What we need now is a surge in diplomacy. That will involve much more

than a few trips to the region. We must actively engage with Iraq's

neighbors in the international community.

But I cannot close without discussing the cost of this war in Iraq.

Some say they want to have a talk about, or votes, not about the

escalation but about whether there are resources for the troops. I

think we should have a real, honest debate that will come in the budget

process about what this war is costing. Let's have a real, honest

debate about the administration's lack of honesty in telling the

American people what this war costs.

Our expenditures in Iraq will saddle our Nation's finances and our

children's future. We spend over $8 billion a month in Iraq; we spend

$2 billion a week in Iraq; we spend $280 million every day in Iraq; we

spend $11.5 million an hour in Iraq.

The Congress has already appropriated $379 billion for Iraq, and

President Bush is now asking for an additional $179 billion. Yet the

Secretary of Defense announced to the Budget Committee, on which I

serve, that he is not going to come before the committee to justify

this spending. To me, that is simply outrageous.

The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction released a new

report saying the Bush administration cannot account for critical

defense materiel, including over $36 million in weapons. Hearings in

the other body revealed that the administration cannot account for over

$8 billion that was sent in cash bundles of $400,000 into a war region,

without any controls. They cannot account for over $8 billion. Now the

administration wants the Congress to hand over another blank check.

Let me put our Iraq spending into perspective.

For what we spend in less than 2 months for operations in Iraq, we

could fully fund No Child Left Behind next year, ensuring that every

school district in the United States has the funds promised to them to

meet the goals of the law.

For what we spend in less than 2 months in Iraq, we could make up the

shortfall in the SCHIP program to help cover children who would

otherwise be uninsured.

For what we spend in 4 days in Iraq, we could substantially improve

security at our Nation's ports with an additional billion dollars,

including increased scanning of cargo containers.

For what we spend in 2\1/2\ months in Iraq, we could pay the $21

billion cost of implementing all of the remaining 9/11 Commission

recommendations to secure our homeland.

Yet we need to look beyond the economic costs of this war at its true

cost: 3,099 American lives, to date. That is invaluable. It is

priceless. More will die in the days ahead if we do not change the

course in Iraq. We now have more than 23,000 sons and daughters of

America who are wounded in ways that will affect their lives forever.

We have a real obligation to all of those who are wounded and their

families, and to the survivors of those who suffered the ultimate

sacrifice. Yet we look at a budget that does not meet that

responsibility.

Today, we should be debating the President's escalation plan,

particularly since we recently learned from the CBO that the escalation

proposed by President Bush would easily cost more than triple what the

administration has told us.

Let me be clear for those who may have not heard about the

Congressional Budget Office report. That report says the President's

escalation plan of 21,000 troops actually only includes combat troops

and not all of the other troops necessary for force operations. The

Congressional Budget Office estimates this could mean an additional

28,000 support personnel, and that the cost could go as high as $29

billion. Now, to deviate from that would be to deviate from every

standard operating procedure the Defense Department has had to support

the men and women in the theater; it would be to deviate from every

historical perspective. Yet that is not what they included in the

budget sent to the Congress.

I am also deeply concerned that the administration has left open the

possibility of yet another emergency supplemental to fund this war in

fiscal year 2008. All that means is we are putting it upon the next

generation of Americans, which is how most of the costs of this war

have taken place--we are putting it on the backs of the next generation

of Americans and not even being responsible for paying for it. We do

all of this while we have the greatest tax cuts for some of the

wealthiest people in the Nation, and at a time when the Nation is at

war. That has never been seen before in the Nation's history.

The administration has never been honest with the American people

about the cost of the war. It is time for that to end. This Senate must

demand an honest accounting before we hand this administration any more

money or, even more importantly, any more troops.

In the end, it is in honor of those men and women who have given the

greatest sacrifice in the line of duty that we must change the course

in Iraq. It is in honor of their courage we

must ensure their comrades are not sent off to carry out a failing plan

designed by their civilian leadership.

I ask each of my colleagues: Are you willing to look a young soldier

in the eye and tell them you are sending them off to Iraq based upon a

failed policy and a recycled plan and based upon the hope that Prime

Minister Maliki will get it right? How many more American lives will we

lose before we realize this plan will not work? And if it were your son

or daughter, how long would you be willing to wait? How long would you

be willing to listen to the counsel of patience, of delay, of only one

more chance, of stay the course?

I know I certainly am not willing to wait any longer.

I believe there is a difference between deference to the Commander in

Chief and blind loyalty. I cannot support blind loyalty that sends more

of America's sons and daughters to die for a war of choice, to die for

a continuing failed policy. In my mind, that is irresponsible and I

believe the very essence of the constitutional framework this country

was founded on requires us to act. That is what the majority leader

wants to do. It is time for some real profiles in courage. I urge my

colleagues to allow us to have an up-or-down vote on the President's

escalation, and to support the Warner-Levin resolution. I hope, beyond

that, at a later time, to support future binding actions to stop the

failed policy in Iraq.

I started today by reminding all of us of the words of John F.

Kennedy and the profiles in courage he detailed in this Senate. He

said:

I ask each Member of the Senate to look into your own soul and your

own conscience, allow us to move to the Warner-Levin resolution, allow

us to have a vote against the escalation of troops in Iraq. The Nation

is waiting and they are watching, and there is accountability to be

had.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.