Mr. President, I will say to my good friend from Missouri

that was a well-done presentation. I know how important this topic is

to him because of his family's commitment to our military, and he, like

many other people in this country, definitely has a vested interest in

the outcome in Iraq in terms of family members.

The point I would like to make this morning, to build on this theme,

is that I passionately believe the outcome in Iraq will not be a

neutral event in terms of the overall war on terror, that success in

Iraq will not be confined to Iraq in terms of winning the war on

terror, and a defeat in Iraq certainly will not be confined to Iraq. It

will spill over and empower extremists in the region and throughout the

world.

The reason I say that is this: Who is the enemy in Iraq? Is this

really a civil war? Certainly there are aspects of sectarian violence

and people trying to seize political power through militia groups and

the use of violence, trying to destroy this democracy and win the day

to control Iraq. There are Shia and Sunni groups trying to do that. But

the vast majority of Iraqis want to go a different way. They want to

live together and try to find some way to reconcile their past

differences and not resort to the use of the gun. I do believe there is

some hope this will happen--and not just blind hope but realistic

progress in Iraq that can be seen if you are willing to look.

The challenges are real. The Iraqi central government has failed on

many fronts to reconcile the country politically. But, as my colleagues

have indicated, the surge, the additional combat power that started in

February and has been in place now for about 3 or 4 weeks, has made a

dramatic difference in certain parts of Iraq.

Mr. O'Hanlon and Mr. Pollack's article has been often mentioned by

Republicans, and they have been critics of the war, but I would just

like to say to them, if they happen to be listening: I appreciate your

willingness to come back and report progress, and I also understand

what you are telling us in your article, that we are a long way from

having it right in Iraq and there are many challenges left. The

political front has been stagnant, but the military front has moved

forward in a very substantial way.

The surge, for me, is not so much that we have moved al-Qaida out of

Anbar but that the people in Anbar, given a choice, have rejected al-

Qaida. The ability to make that choice was provided by the additional

combat power coming from the surge. An offensive strategy is now in

place, and it has replaced a defensive strategy. The old strategy of

training the Iraqi police and military and hiding behind walls simply

wasn't working. The new strategy of going out in the communities and

living with the Iraqi police and army is paying dividends.

Anbar truly has changed in a phenomenal way, as Senator Bond said.

You can go to Ramadi now--someplace you couldn't go a few months ago.

Again, the Iraqi Sunni residents of Anbar tasted al Qaida's lifestyle,

had an experience in terms of what al-Qaida would impose upon their

families, and said: No, thank you. And along comes American forces to

help them reinforce that choice.

The biggest news in Anbar is that 12,000 people joined the local

police force in 2007, where there were only 1,000 in 2006. So that

means when we do leave--and it is all of our goal to withdraw from

Iraq--the goal should be to withdraw with honor and security, and honor

means you leave the country without those who helped you fight al-Qaida

and other extremists getting slaughtered. I don't think we could leave

that country with much honor if we left in a way that allowed those who

bravely stepped out and embraced moderation to be killed by the

extremists. From a security perspective, it is important that we leave

Iraq in a stable situation and that the problems there do not spill

over to the other parts of the region and the world at large.

Now, whom are we fighting? There are sectarian conflicts. There are

power struggles to regain control of Iraq. That is part of the enemy.

Al-Qaida is part of the enemy. And al-Qaida is really not limited in

controlling Iraq. It is not their goal to take over central Baghdad and

run Iraq; their goal, in my opinion, is to come into Iraq and make sure

this attempt at moderation and democracy fails.

Is there a connection between al-Qaida in Iraq and bin Laden and his

organization? About a week ago, President Bush came to Charleston, SC,

and spoke at Charleston's Air Force Base. He made a very logical,

reasoned case that there is a deep connection between al-Qaida in Iraq

and the bin Laden infrastructure. To those who say that al-Qaida in

Iraq is really a separate organization with a separate agenda, I think

you are not understanding who the major players are and what their

agenda includes.

No. 1, their agenda is to defeat us in Iraq and drive America out and

be able to claim to the rest of the world that they beat us. If you

don't believe me, ask Bin Laden or look at what bin Laden says. Bin

Laden claimed, ``The Third World war is raging in Iraq.'' Osama Bin

Laden says, ``The war is for you or for us to win. If we win it, it

means your defeat and your disgrace forever.''

Well, I think he understands the consequences of a victory by al-

Qaida. He also understands the consequences of a defeat by America. The

question I have is, Do we understand that? Do we understand what would

happen to this country and all forces of moderation in the Mideast and

throughout the world if it were perceived that al-Qaida in Iraq was

able to drive the United States out of that country and leave it to the

warlords of terrorism?

Who is al-Qaida in Iraq? The founder of al-Qaida in Iraq was not an

Iraqi, it was a Jordanian--al-Zarqawi. He was a Jordanian terrorist.

Before 9/11, he ran a terrorist camp in Afghanistan. After joining

Osama bin Laden, he left Afghanistan, after the fall of the Taliban,

and went to Iraq. Zarqawi and his terrorist group formally joined bin

Laden, pledging allegiance to Osama bin Laden, and promised to follow

his orders in jihad. Soon after, bin Laden publicly declared that

Zarqawi was the prince of al-Qaida in Iraq and instructed terrorists in

Iraq to listen to him and obey him. Now, to me, that is a pretty

serious connection.

Beyond Zarqawi, who was from Jordan, bin Laden sent an Egyptian, who

was a member of al-Qaida's international infrastructure, to provide

support to Zarqawi and leadership. And the President gave a laundry

list of international terrorists tied to bin Laden who migrated to Iraq

to build up al-Qaida in Iraq. They have the same agenda. The agenda is

to defeat moderation where you find it, to try to control as much of

the Mideast as possible. And their agenda doesn't just include Iraq.

The Gulf States are next and after that Israel, and always us.

Now, that is not what I am saying; that is what they say. So I think

the President made a very persuasive case that the infrastructure of

al-Qaida in Iraq is very much tied to the bin Laden organization. If

you don't believe that, come down and let's have a debate about it.

Who else is our enemy in Iraq? Iran. This body passed unanimously a

resolution authored by Senator Lieberman during the Defense

authorization debate, and part of that resolution was a laundry list of

activity by Iran, particularly the Quds Force, part of the

Revolutionary Guard, in terms of trying to kill Americans in Iraq and

destabilize the efforts of building a democracy in Iraq. On February

11, 2007, the U.S. military held a briefing in Baghdad at which its

representatives stated that at least 170 members of the U.S. Armed

Forces have been killed and at least 620 wounded by weapons tied to

Iran.

This resolution which we passed was a damning indictment of Iran's

involvement in Iraq about training, providing funds, providing

weaponry, and bringing Hezbollah agents from Lebanon into Iraq to try

to assist extremist groups whose goal it is to kill Americans and to

destabilize this effort of democracy.

Now, why does al-Qaida come to Iraq? I said before that their biggest

nightmare is a moderate form of government where Sunnis and Shias and

Kurds and all different groups could live together, accepting their

differences, where a woman could have a say about her children by being

able to run for office and vote and have a strong voice in society.

That is their worst nightmare.

Whether we should have gone to Iraq or not is a historical debate. We

have made plenty of mistakes after the fall of Baghdad. But the biggest

mistake would be not to recognize that Iraq is part of a global

struggle. There are sectarian conflicts in Iraq; I acknowledge that.

There has been a major failure of political reconciliation; I

acknowledge that. The old strategy was not working; I acknowledged that

2 or 3 years ago. The new strategy is providing dividends in terms of

defeating al-Qaida in Iraq. The Iraqi people in the Sunni areas have

turned against al-Qaida in Iraq. That is good news. Political

reconciliation is occurring at the local provincial level. I hope it

works its way up.

Another aspect of Iraq, to me, which is undeniable--and I understand

the challenges, and I think I see the successes for what they are--is

that the Iranian Government's involvement in Iraq is major. It is

substantial. It is designed to break our will. Their efforts include

killing our troops, and they are there to make sure this experiment in

democracy fails because Iran's worst nightmare is to have a functioning

democracy on their border.

So this is part of a global struggle, and the outcome will create

momentum one way or the other. I hope the outcome will be a success for

moderation and a defeat of extremism.

I yield the floor.