Mr. President, tonight President Bush will address our

Nation. The subject is one that is on the minds of virtually every

American. It is Iraq. According to the accounts in the press, President

Bush will be announcing that he will be increasing the number of U.S.

forces in Iraq, perhaps by 20,000 troops.

If these news accounts are correct, that means an additional 20,000

American service men and women will be sent into harm's way or ordered

to remain there for longer tours of duty.

This morning on television, on CNN, they interviewed the families of

some soldiers who are now headed for their third tour of duty. There

was a sad, heartbreaking interview with a mother--her two small

children nearby, and her soldier husband sitting just a chair away. She

said she could not be prouder of her husband. She considered him a hero

and a brave man and that he would answer the call of duty whenever. But

she said, in her words: It is just so frustrating trying to raise this

family with my husband being called to duty over and over and over

again.

Our hearts go out to those families. Our prayers are with them and

the troops as this decision is made to escalate this war in Iraq, to

raise the number of troops from 144,000 to possibly 164,000 or higher.

These troops follow these orders because they are the best and the

bravest. They march off to war, risk their lives, away from those they

love because they are sworn to protect this great Nation. We can never

thank them enough for what they are doing. Every moment of debate that

we have on the floor of this Senate about the policy of our Government

toward Iraq should not diminish nor detract from our great debt of

gratitude to these men and women and their families.

I will be joining a number of my colleagues this afternoon as we sit

with the President for a final briefing before his decision. Sadly, I

am afraid that decision has already been made. It is the wrong

decision. For reasons I do not understand, President Bush has reversed

a position which he took early on. His position was that he would heed

the advice and counsel of the men and women in uniform, of the generals

in the field, of those who were in command and could see the actual

battle on a day-to-day basis. The President told us, over and over

again, he would only dispatch as many troops as they asked for. But

clearly that has changed.

General Abizaid, who was the leader, the commanding general of

CENTCOM, who oversaw Iraq and Afghanistan, told us in November he saw

no reason for more U.S. troops. Let me read what General Abizaid said

in testimony before Congress just weeks ago:

General Abizaid went on to say:

General Abizaid said:

Those are the words of the commanding general in Iraq a few weeks

ago. Those were words which the President told the American people

repeatedly would be his guidance in making decisions about whether to

send more troops into battle. Those are words which the President

tonight will ignore and reject.

There is a sad reality. The sad reality is this: 20,000 American

soldiers, too few to end this civil war in Iraq; too many American

soldiers to lose. I do not understand the President's logic. I do not

understand how 20,000 troops could significantly make any difference.

Will there be a time line for these troops? If this is, in effect, a

surge, as the White House has characterized it over and over again, is

it temporary in nature? Well, if it is a surge that is temporary in

nature, it betrays another position taken by the White House. How many

times have we been told we cannot talk about an orderly

withdrawal from Iraq or redeployment? How many times have we been told

we do not talk about when we are going to bring American soldiers home

for fear the enemy in Iraq will wait us out?

If this increase and escalation of troops is temporary in nature,

then it betrays the argument which the White House has made now for

years. If we are going to add 20,000 troops, how can we guarantee that

the enemy will not?

I find it hard to follow the President's logic. I don't understand

why he believes 20,000 troops will change the complexion of a civil

war. I certainly don't understand how sending troops in on a temporary

basis is going to result in anything of a positive nature. Army Chief

of Staff Peter Schoomaker said:

What is the purpose? How will it be measured, and what is the

timeline for completion? When does the President expect these troops

and the 144,000 other American troops currently in Iraq to return home?

The President may not want to use the word ``escalation,'' but that is

the word that fits because if he is going to increase the number of

troops, increase the danger to our soldiers, it is an escalation of

this war. Like Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon, President Bush

is saying that he is sending more troops because conditions on the

ground demand it.

In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson said:

But that escalation was followed by many others because American

Presidents were trying to win someone else's civil war and because they

were refusing to recognize the fundamental reality.

It is that the Iraqis, if we send in 20,000 more troops, will assign

20,000 troops or more to match. I suggest that that is a departure from

what we have heard from this White House. Every schoolchild in America

can recite the mantra: As they stand up, we will stand down. We have

heard this over and over and over again. The suggestion that, as the

Iraqi soldiers stand up and take responsibility, American soldiers can

come home, that has been the promise. But if this is the bargain today,

20,000 American troops to generate 20,000 Iraqi troops, then we have

changed the mantra. The mantra now is, as American troops stand up,

Iraqi troops will stand up. If that is, in fact, the new policy, how

can there ever be any end in sight?

We understand the reality. After almost 4 years, in a war that has

lasted longer than World War II, we understand that we cannot win on a

military basis. The President said it. Secretaries of Defense have said

it. The generals in the field have said it. The Iraq war can only be

stabilized and won on a political and economic basis. And to start

with, we must disband the militias. The notion that leaders like Sadr

can create a militia, a death squad, which can roam the streets of

Baghdad and the roads of Iraq with impunity, suggests that there will

be no stability and no security under these circumstances. The simple

fact is, there is no sharing of power.

When I visited Iraq the second time a few weeks ago with Senator Jack

Reed of Rhode Island, we visited ministries which provide services

almost exclusively to one religious sect. The health ministry, under

the control of Mr. Sadr, is a ministry which provides few if any

services to Sunnis. The Sunni population, which is about a third of the

population of Iraq, doesn't get the hospitals and doctors. This

ministry just helps Shias.

I also talked to some people in the field. I said: When it comes to

police protection, how does that work?

Well, if you go into Baghdad and go into the police station, you will

quickly learn whether it is a Shia or Sunni police station. Shia police

don't arrest Shia civilians, and Sunni police don't arrest Sunni

civilians. That is how badly fractured the society of Iraq is today. Is

there anyone who believes that 20,000 American troops will change that?

That decision has to be made by that Government's leaders to change

Iraq and move it toward a nation and away from warring factions.

Some are skeptical. They argue that this division in Islam is 14

centuries old, and it is naive for westerners such as Americans and the

Brits to believe that the arrival of the best troops in the world is

somehow going to quell the flames of this battle that has gone on for

centuries. It certainly isn't. It isn't going to change the

circumstance without new political leadership. We need to establish

civil order in Iraq. We need to make certain that we have leadership in

this government that makes hard decisions that moves it toward a true

nation. That is the answer to the stability of Iraq, not 20,000

American soldiers and marines, sailors, and airmen who are now going to

add to the ranks of those who risk their lives every day.

It is time for the President to also be honest with the American

people about the cost of this war. As of this morning, 3,015 American

troops have died in Iraq; 7 times that number have come home disabled,

maimed, blinded, suffering amputations and traumatic brain injury. That

is the human legacy which is the paramount concern we all have.

There has also been another legacy of cost, almost $2 billion a week

that we are spending in the war on Iraq, money taken out of the United

States and away from the very real needs of our Nation being spent over

there. Yet here in the fourth year of this war, less electricity is

being generated in Iraq than on the day we invaded. There is an

opportunity for us to provide drinking water, but it, unfortunately,

hasn't been successful, despite 4 years of effort. Sewage facilities,

jobs, the most basic things, the most basic services by which you judge

a society, those measurements tell us that we have failed to produce in

Iraq as promised.

That is the reality, despite some $380 to $400 billion having been

spent by the United States in the 4 years we have been involved in this

war. Now the administration is preparing another supplemental request.

I read in the papers this morning that they are going to try to keep it

under $100 billion. They come in and call this war an unanticipated

emergency appropriation. We are now in the fourth year of unanticipated

emergency appropriations. Sadly, every dollar we are spending in Iraq

is a dollar not spent in America and a dollar of debt left to our

children.

This President is the first President in the history of the United

States, despite all the conflicts Presidents have faced, to call for a

tax cut in the midst of a war, making our deficit situation even worse.

The President needs to be much more honest with the American people in

terms of the real cost of this war.

Let's speak for a moment about the state of our military. Again, they

are the best and bravest in the world. Meeting with them on my recent

trip, I left with pride that they would put on the uniform and risk

their lives for our country. But our military has paid a heavy price,

not just in the deaths and casualties but in the fact that they have

lost combat readiness, equipment. They have been weakened in a world

where we can't afford to be weak. This President refuses to replenish

the troops as needed. Our National Guard units in Illinois and across

the Nation have about one-third of the equipment they need to respond

to a domestic crisis or if activated again in Iraq. There is little or

no effort to replenish these troops as they must be. We struggle,

offering bonuses and incentives to bring in more recruits and retain

those who are currently serving, understanding that our ranks are

thinning because we have asked so much of these men and women who serve

us.

General Abizaid told the Senate Armed Services Committee in November

that the military does not have the capacity to maintain an additional

20,000 soldiers and marines in Iraq. It will be interesting to see how

the President suggests we find these soldiers and marines that he now

wants to send over in the escalation of this war.

General Abizaid said:

That was the general's testimony just a few weeks ago. Yet the

President has decided to ignore the general's statement and to call for

more troops. I don't doubt the Pentagon can find somewhere to get

additional troops, extending the tours of duty of those who

are currently there, for example; and I don't doubt that our brave men

and women will bear this ever-increasing burden. But I ask, at what

cost to our Nation, at what cost to its families?

We have to ask as well: How does sending more troops represent the

change in direction so clearly called for by the American people when

they voted this last November? Tragically, this idea of escalating the

war is more of the same. Tonight I expect the President to use the word

``change'' repeatedly, but I have seen little to give me hope that he

will actually implement change or a new direction in our policy in

Iraq.

I want Congress and the American people to finally ask the hard

questions. For the 4 years of this war, this Congress has been supine.

It has refused to stand up and accept its constitutional responsibility

to hold this administration, as it should hold every administration,

accountable for its conduct and spending. That is why I am heartened to

know that even this week, we will have our first hearings before the

Senate Armed Services Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations

Committee, hearings by Chairman Levin and Chairman Biden, in an effort

to ask some of the hard questions about the policies we have in Iraq.

This line of inquiry is long overdue. Simple things need to be asked.

First, some accountability when it comes to the money that is being

spent. We have all heard about the abuses, the profiteering. It doesn't

make America any safer or help our troops at all. It pads the bottom

line for private companies, many of whom benefit from no-bid contracts,

but it doesn't make us any safer. We need to hold the Department of

Defense accountable, to make sure that taxpayers' money is well spent,

to make sure that the money being spent for our troops is, in fact,

providing them with the best equipment and everything that was

promised. That inquiry is long overdue.

We are also, of course, going to face the reality that this civil war

in Iraq is getting worse and not better. When 3,000 civilians die in

the course of a month, it is an indication of a society that is out of

control.

We will soon be approaching the fourth anniversary of the invasion. I

can remember when the vote was cast on the floor of the Senate. It was

late at night. It was a week or two before the election. Several of us

who had voted against this use of force because of our serious concerns

didn't know, of course, what it would mean in the next election or how

this would play out ultimately.

We stand here today, some 4 years later after that vote, and realize

that this decision to invade Iraq was the most serious strategic

mistake in foreign policy made by this country in the last four

decades. One has to go back to the decision in Vietnam to continue to

escalate that conflict, long after we had any prospect of success or

victory, to find an analogy in recent memory.

The time came under President Gerald Ford when he faced the reality

of Vietnam. It is time for President Bush to face the reality of Iraq.

The reality is this: America has paid a heavy price. We have paid with

American blood. We have paid with American sacrifice. We have paid with

American treasure. We have given the Iraqis so much. We have deposed

their dictator. We put him on trial. He will no longer be on the scene

in any way, shape, or form since his execution. We have given them a

chance to draft their own constitution, hold their own free elections,

establish their own government. We have protected them when no one else

would. America has done everything promised in Iraq. The reality,

though, is we have done what we can do. Now it is up to the Iraqis. It

is up to them to stand and defend their own country.

Sending in 20,000 more troops at this moment says to the Iraqis:

Don't worry. America will always be there to bear the brunt of battle

so that Iraqis don't have to.

That is not the right approach. The best approach is for us to start

redeploying our troops on a systematic basis so that the Iraqis know

that it is their responsibility and their country that they must stand

and defend. It is time for us not to send more American troops into

danger but to bring American troops out of danger and back home. That

needs to start and start immediately.

Instead of the President's escalation of the war within the next 6

months, we should begin to redeploy our troops so that it truly becomes

an Iraqi effort to create an Iraqi nation. Our end goal, as the Baker-

Hamilton Iraq Study Group showed us, should be redeployment,

repositioning of the majority of our forces by the first quarter of

2008. Escalation is not a blueprint for success. It is a roadmap to

where we have already been.

I am happy to yield.

Our feeling is that we could not do it immediately. The

Baker-Hamilton study group suggested that we would basically redeploy

our troops over a 15-month basis. That would suggest an orderly

movement of troops of maybe 10,000 a month. But if you did it

precipitously, it would create a danger for our troops and an

instability. I think if we had an orderly redeployment, withdrawal, the

Iraqis would get the message that they have to step in as American

troops are redeployed.

I don't serve on the Armed Services Committee, but it is

my guess that redeploying troops is also a very expensive endeavor--

maybe as expensive as deploying them and holding a position. So I don't

know if there will be a savings if there is a redeployment. Although I

voted against the use of force resolution that led to the invasion, I

voted for every penny this administration asked for for the troops. I

believe--and I think my fellow colleagues on the Democratic side, and I

am sure on the Republican side--that they don't want to shortchange the

troops either as they stay in Iraq or if they are redeployed from Iraq.

I would judge the supplemental under those circumstances. What will it

cost to redeploy them safely?

I don't speak for the leadership or anybody in the

caucus, but I believe that. This notion that we are dealing with an

unanticipated expenditure in the fourth year of this war is a charade.

I think it would be better for us to deal with this in the regular

appropriations process so that we can integrate the cost of the

supplemental with the actual expenses of the Department of Defense and

do our best to meet the needs of our soldiers and yet not waste

taxpayer dollars.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

What I described to you is the Baker-Hamilton proposal. I

did make exceptions for leaving troops there for training purposes and

for hunting down al-Qaida terrorists, those specific circumstances. My

feeling is that over a 4-to-6-month basis, we need to establish

timelines so our troops could start moving away from Iraq and the

Iraqis can step in. I use 10,000 a month because that is the way the

math works if you follow Baker-Hamilton. It could be zero troops

withdrawn or redeployed in the first 60 days, and 20,000 or 30,000 at

some future time.

My personal belief is that until the Iraqis understand that we are

leaving, they will not accept the responsibility to defend their own

government and country, and they won't make the hard political

decisions to put an end to the civil war.

The redeployment would take the troops out of Iraq and,

perhaps, position them in a nearby country. We would still be involved

in trade, still be involved in hunting down al-Qaida forces and trying

to stop terrorism. Yes, our feeling is--and I think the Senate vote on

this--we should begin redeploying troops on a 4-to-6-month basis.