Mr. President, I rise to discuss the situation in

Iraq. President Bush, last night, reiterated America's commitment and

resolve to finishing the job in Iraq. First, I think the President made

it clear how high the stakes are in Iraq by demonstrating that Iraq is

front and center in the global war on terror. Just listen to Osama bin

Laden. Bin Laden is quoted as saying: ``The whole world is watching

this war'' and that the Iraq war will result in either ``victory and

glory or misery and humiliation.'' Al-Qaida certainly recognizes how

high the stakes are. So do our European allies.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said the other day that ``[t]here

can be no question a stable and democratic Iraq is in the vested

interest of not just Germany, but also Europe.'' That was Schroeder,

who was not exactly a cheerleader for the Iraq war.

Yet we continue to hear the refrain from some quarters that it is

time to cut and run, that we should set arbitrary deadlines for

withdrawal, to get out while we can. If September 11 taught us

anything, it is that retreating in the face of terrorism and hoping for

the best is not the way to protect American lives. Quite the opposite.

It is a display of weakness, and it is an invitation to America's

enemies. As the President forcefully conveyed last night, we must take

the fight to the enemies, or they will take the fight to us on our

shores and on their terms.

Second, the President outlined a clear plan regarding the future of

our engagement in Iraq. He explained his two-tier strategy there,

involving both the democracy building side and the military side of the

equation.

On the democracy building side, the President rightly reminded the

American people of the important progress that has been made in just 1

year. The terrorists, for all of their heinous acts, simply could not

interrupt the transfer of sovereignty, nor could the terrorists derail

the January elections. The Iraqi people were too determined to move

their country forward. The Iraqi people cast their ballots for freedom

and democracy and against terrorism. In so doing, the Iraqi people set

an example other democracy activists in the Middle East have begun to

follow. The Iraqi people are also moving forward in the drafting of

their constitution, which their political leaders have publicly

declared will indeed be completed by the August 15 deadline.

On the military side, President Bush discussed his new approaches to

training the Iraqi security forces to fight the enemy and defend

freedom. Some in this country belittled the Iraqi security forces. They

have been running them down. Frankly, I find this reprehensible. More

than 2,000 members of the Iraqi security forces have laid down their

lives defending freedom in their country, fighting alongside our

troops, and more Iraqis keep enlisting every single day. These

volunteers are Iraqi patriots, and the President was right to

acknowledge the supreme sacrifice made by these friends of freedom.

Iraq has two ways it can go. We can leave the country to be preyed

upon by murderers who want to turn the country into a Taliban-like

nation, a haven for terrorist camps, and a factory of hatred, or we can

stand and fight by defending liberty and democracy in Iraq and

demonstrating an alternative to the ways of terror and of Saddam

Hussein. We can help Iraqis help themselves and, in the process, help

the United States by making the Middle East a more democratic and

peaceful region. And when Iraq is strong enough to stand up on its own

two feet and Iraqi security forces can fully defend their own country,

our troops will stand down and come home.

Third, the President rightly noted the progress that is being made on

the ground. The elite media in our country, however, is always focusing

on bad news. They teach them in journalism school that only bad news is

news. You would never know, for example, that more than 600 Iraqi

schools have been renovated to date, or that construction is underway

at 144 new primary health care facilities across that country. You

won't find that written about in the elite media.

Finally, I was pleased to see the President pay tribute to our brave

men and women in uniform. They are an inspiration to all of us, and I

am confident that the American people throughout our great land will

take up the President's invitation to honor them over the Independence

Day holiday.

Our work in Iraq is challenging, but it is a noble endeavor, an

endeavor in which progress is being made every single day--a message

President Bush delivered very clearly last night.

I yield the floor.