Mr. President, I rise to speak on the progress America is

making in the global war on terrorism and in particular on the progress

being made in Iraq.

Recently we passed a solemn benchmark. Two thousand of our servicemen

and women have paid the ultimate price in defense of freedom. A vocal

minority contend that these casualties were in vain. They claim we are

in Iraq for all the wrong reasons. Further, they say that since there

have been no weapons of mass destruction uncovered in Iraq that the

administration obviously lied to get Americans behind the initial war

effort. I think it is important that we take a few minutes to recall

the world in which we lived prior to taking military action against

Saddam Hussein in 2003.

The previous administration was quite clear in their belief that Iraq

possessed weapons of mass destruction. Then-President Clinton said:

Clinton's National Security Advisor, Sandy Berger, said of Hussein:

Even after he left office, Al Gore stated:

Madeline Albright said:

Let us all remember, Iraq had been in blatant violation of 17

separate United Nations resolutions dating back to the first Persian

Gulf War--resolutions which required Iraq to reveal prohibited WMD and

missile programs to U.N. inspectors. American and British warplanes

were continually fired upon while enforcing U.N.-mandated ``no fly

zones'' in Iraq.

In 1993, terrorists detonated a bomb in the garage of the World Trade

Center in an attempt to topple this symbol of capitalism.

In 1996, the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, housing an Air Force

Fighter Wing, were attacked by terrorists. Nineteen U.S. servicemembers

lost their lives. Hundreds were wounded.

In 1998, the U.S. Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya were bombed by

terrorists. Hundreds lost their lives.

In October of 2000, the USS Cole was attacked by terrorists while

refueling in Yemen. Seventeen sailors lost their lives. Many more were

injured. And, of course, we all remember the day the Pentagon was

attacked and the World Trade Center was leveled by terrorists crashing

commercial airliners into both structures on 9/11, resulting in more

than 3,000 of our fellow citizens being killed and America finally

waking up to the reality that is terrorism.

The terrorists had no reason to believe that we would respond to 9/11

because we had not responded in the past. At that time, every country

in the free world believed that Iraq possessed weapons of mass

destruction. Saddam Hussein did nothing to dispel those beliefs. He had

actually used chemical weapons on Iranians and on his own citizens.

President Bush could not risk America's future on the hope that a

dictator like Hussein, with a track record that included grotesque

human rights abuses, aggression against his neighbors, and the

harboring and funding of terrorists, could be reformed or indefinitely

contained.

In fact, the Senate chose not to risk America's future either. This

body voted 77-23 in favor of the resolution allowing President Bush to

use force in Iraq. Those voting in the affirmative included the then-

Democratic Leader of the Senate, the ranking member of the Foreign

Relations Committee, the ranking member of the Intelligence Committee

and the Democratic nominee for President in the 2004 election.

I have a few quotes I would like to read.

Senator Jay Rockefeller, Congressional Record, October 2002:

He obviously had access to the intelligence that the President had.

Senator John Kerry, Congressional Record, October 2002:

Senator Hillary Clinton, Congressional Record, October 2002:

Senator Carl Levin, Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing,

September 2002:

I could go on. We have lots of quotes, but let's stop for now.

On March 19, 2003, 2 days after our President's televised ultimatum,

a 35-nation coalition launched operations to disarm Iraq.

In a matter of weeks, Hussein's decades-old regime had been removed,

liberating 25 million Iraqis from one of the world's most brutal

tyrannies.

That was 2 1/2 years ago. Now, because things aren't quite as

antiseptic as some would like, there are calls for American troop

withdrawal. Again, I think it is important for us to review just how

far we've come over the last 2 1/2 years.

As far as security is concerned, the initial 35-nation coalition that

liberated Iraq has increased to include 72 countries.

Iraqi Security Forces are continuing to take a more prominent role in

defending their country. One hundred sixteen Iraqi battalions are

currently conducting military operations. That's 22 more battalions on

line than there were just 3 months ago.

As President Bush has stated numerous times:

Our assistance to the people of Iraq is not limited to the military.

There have been infrastructure improvements as well, including almost

3,500 schools.

Also, there were no commercial TV stations in Iraq before the war;

today there are 44.

There were no independent newspapers or magazines in Iraq before the

war. Today there are more than 100.

In January of this year, 8 million Iraqi citizens, in the face of

violent threats, voted to establish a parliament. Last month, the

Iraqis again returned to the polls in large numbers, and almost 10

million this time--more than 60 percent of the registered voters--voted

to approve their constitution. This coming December, they will return

to the polls to elect a fully constitutional government.

Because of America's leadership, compassion, and sacrifice, the world

has witnessed the end of Saddam Hussein's regime and the beginnings of

an energetic democracy in Iraq. This fledgling democracy has the

ability to transform a region that has been a breeding ground for

terrorists.

The world is a safer place because Qadhafi saw the fate of Saddam

Hussein and decided Libya was better off with its weapons of mass

destruction program under lock and key.

We are safer because the AQ Kahn network has been shut down and is no

longer supplying materiel support to Iran and North Korea's nuclear

efforts.

We are safer because terrorists and the countries that harbor them

know if they threaten the United States, they could be the next ones to

feel the force of the U.S. military.

Our word means something now because the President laid a marker down

in the sand and stood behind that marker when it was time--when Saddam

Hussein did not come forward and

agree to the resolutions that the United Nations had passed.

I believe the more than 2,000 members of our military who have died

in service for our Nation in Iraq--and others will surely follow them--

have made our country safer.

I believe history will show in the fullness of time that America was

involved in a noble effort that transformed a region and indeed the

world.

I yield the floor.