Mr. President, I thank the leaders for the time this

morning.

I recently returned from a trip looking into what is taking place in

the war on terrorism. I was in Afghanistan in Kabul and also went to

the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, had a brief meeting in Pakistan with

our Ambassador and military leadership in Pakistan and also in Kuwait.

I then went from there to Iraq. I was in Baghdad for a period of 24

hours plus. I went to Irbil in northern Iraq in the Kurdish region, met

with Barzani, head of the Kurdish region, and traveled to Ethiopia to

the current front, the expanded front in the war on terrorism, saw what

the Ethiopians are doing in Somalia. I met with the Prime Minister of

Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, about what he is doing in Somalia. I had a very

good meeting with him and also with our military commanders in that

region, with the recent strikes we have done against terrorism in

southern Somalia and work we have done with the Ethiopians.

All of this was very informative. There is a mixture of news to

report as to what is taking place in the war on terrorism. There are

some very positive things happening, particularly the recent events in

Somalia, what the Ethiopians are pushing for, and some very positive

things happening in Afghanistan, some difficulties we are still having

with Pakistani leadership going after some of the threats on the

Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Northern Iraq is booming, the Kurdish area. Investment is flowing.

There are cranes and people are building. Baghdad is in great

difficulty.

I, also, wish to talk about my suggestions for the route forward. I

think the President, in his address, was saying he is proposing a route

forward, and if others might oppose or have a different view, all I ask

is that you put forward a proposal yourself. That is fair. That is what

we ought to do. We are all in this, and we need to see the route

forward.

There is good news in Iraq, certainly. We have 140,000 of America's

best and brightest working hard every day. I flew on troop transport

planes in and out of various places with the troops and met and visited

with them along the way. They are impressive. Their dedication and

courage and commitment is impressive to feel. It is inspiring. It is

inspiring to see. I have a niece and nephew who have signed up to join

the Marines. So they are going into this as well. I am proud of them,

as is the whole family.

The irrepressible spirit of our soldiers--from new recruits to

veterans of multiple--is inspiring. I even saw a father-son team from

Kansas in Kuwait. They are enthusiastic, determined, and we depend on

them for the success we will achieve in Iraq. I know firsthand it is

not just a good sound bite to say we have the best Armed Forces in the

world. There is simply no other place in the world that can boast of so

many courageous, committed, and talented volunteers so willing to make

sacrifices, whenever the country calls upon them. They continue to

deserve our great respect and admiration for performing so ably under

such difficult circumstances. And the circumstances are that.

Baghdad still feels similar to an occupation zone. I was physically

present in Baghdad for about 24 hours. It is hard to say that I saw the

city. I left with an enduring image of concrete barriers and convoys of

SUVs. I last visited Baghdad in March 2005. The environment is no

better than it was at that period of time. Three mortar rounds exploded

in the green zone while I was there meeting with the Iraqi Vice

President. No one was harmed. They were launched from somewhere way

out, but still they hit. It shows how insecure the city remains.

We all wish the situation would get better, but I am particularly

disappointed. I have had a long-term interest in Iraq. When I first

came to the Senate in 1996, I served on the Foreign Relations Committee

and chaired the Middle East Subcommittee that held some of the first

hearings on what to do about Saddam Hussein's regime. I carried the

Iraq Liberation Act on the floor of the Senate that was signed into law

by President Bill Clinton. I helped get the initial $100 million for

the Iraqi National Congress. I, also, attended the first INC meeting

with Senator Bob Kerrey of Nebraska. We both went to New York City to

meet with the opposition about what to do about Saddam Hussein. I,

also, attended the first Iraqi National Congress meeting in London. I

have been committed to a free, safe, and secure Iraq from the very

beginning.

During my meetings last week, I found less reason for optimism. Sunni

leaders blame everything on the Shia, and the Shia leaders likewise

blame everything on the Sunnis. The Kurdish leadership pointed out that

the Sunnis and Shia only meet when the Kurds call the meeting. All of

this suggests that, at the present time, the United States seems to

care more about a peaceful Iraq than the Iraqis do. If that is the

case, it is difficult to understand why more U.S. troops would make a

difference.

One other bright spot was my visit to the northern part of the

country, the Kurdish region. The security situation is stable and

business is booming, as some number of people moving out of Iraq are

moving into northern Iraq into the Kurdish region. The Kurds are

demonstrating what is possible for the rest of Iraq when violence

recedes. The Kurds are pragmatic. They are worried about committing

Kurdish forces to Baghdad. I asked Brazani, would he commit Kurdish

forces for the peace in Baghdad? He declined to do so. They don't want

to get caught in the middle of a sectarian fight. If Iraqi Kurds feel

this way, why should we feel any differently? Simply put, the Iraqis

have to resolve these sectarian differences. We cannot do it for them.

This does not mean we should pull out of Iraq and leave behind a

security vacuum or safe haven for terrorists. I do not support that

alternative. It does mean that there must be a bipartisan agreement on

our military commitment to Iraq. We cannot fight a war with the support

of only one political party, and it does mean that the parties in

Iraq--Sunni, Shia, and Kurds--must get to a political equilibrium. I

think most people agree that a cut-and-run strategy does not serve our

interests, nor those of the world, nor those of the region, nor those

of the Iraqi people.

So I invite my colleagues all around, particularly on the other side

of the aisle, to indicate what level of commitment they can support. We

need to come together in Congress, and as a nation, on a strategy that

will make real progress in Iraq and gain as much support as possible

from the American people. Only a broadly supported, bipartisan strategy

will allow us to remain in Iraq for the length of time necessary to

ensure regional stability and to defeat the terrorists. That is our

objective. Make no mistake, we may need to be in Iraq for some period

of time, as we are in Bosnia, as we were in Europe, as we still remain

in Korea. Iraqis should patrol their own streets, but we must continue

to hunt down the terrorists. We must balance the aggressive moves by

Iran, operating inside of Iraq, which seeks to exploit Iraq for its own

gain.

These missions will take time to achieve on our part. It is vital we

get a bipartisan way forward on Iraq as soon as possible. I invite

people on the other side of the aisle to put forward their proposals.

As we refine our military posture, we should also enlist the support of

Iraq's neighbors, through a diplomatic initiative similar to the

recommendations of the Baker-Hamilton Commission. Although I don't

support all of those initiatives, I thought they had some good ideas,

particularly engaging Iraq's neighbors. Each of Iraq's

neighbors can benefit from a peaceful Iraq, and they can assist us in

reaching a political equilibrium among Iraq's various groups. These

include Iran and Syria, which are clearly meddling in Iraq but whose

cooperation will be necessary for any political solution in Iraq to be

relevant for the long term.

To be successful, such a diplomatic initiative will require a great

amount of attention and hard work. Thus, I recommend Secretary Rice and

Vice President Cheney go to Iraq and practice shuttle diplomacy. They

should lay the groundwork for a meeting of leaders from all three major

Iraqi groups to take place outside of Iraq. This kind of a meeting

could be similar to the Dayton Accords that helped resolve the conflict

in Bosnia. It would allow for intense, sustained discussions aimed at a

durable, long-term political settlement amongst the Iraqis. One

potential political settlement could involve a three-State, one-country

formula. Each of Iraq's major groups would have its own autonomous

region with Baghdad as a federal city.

Each group can manage its own affairs while preserving Iraq's

territorial integrity. This is something the Iraqi Constitution allows,

that the Kurdish people are practicing, and that the Iraqi leaders, I

believe, should pursue to get to a political equilibrium. We have made

our share of mistakes in Iraq. Still, we have invested the lives of

more than 3,000 of our best and brightest for our Nation's future.

The mission for which they died is not yet complete. We still need

political equilibrium if we are to achieve a stable, united Iraq that

can be an ally in the war on terrorism. We must win in Iraq, and we

will. We must win for the future of the region and for the future of

the world and for the future of Iraq. We must win for the future of

America. That victory will require more than bullets; it will require

political arrangements inside Iraq and around Iraq to end the sectarian

violence and move toward a peaceful future for the Iraqi people and

stability for the region. We are in a tough time, but I believe we have

solutions that can work.

I yield the floor.