Mr. President, President Bush has spent the last 2 weeks

talking up the ``progress'' we are making in Iraq and talking down the

Democrats and some of our Republican colleagues for trying to bring

this war to a responsible end. But sometimes that is a problem because

you have to deal with the facts. The facts are not as the President

wants them to be but as they exist on the ground. The fact is, the

President is totally out of touch with reality. He is out of touch with

the American people and with America's interests in the region.

I have been here a while, and I can say I have never seen a President

as isolated since Richard Nixon. The President appears to be totally

removed from reality. He tells us that Attorney General Gonzales has

done a great job, when anybody who watched it views it as one of the

least impressive appearances of an Attorney General. He tells us that

the President of the World Bank, an American, is doing a great job,

oblivious to the damage being done to America's reputation around the

world. And against the advice of some of the most gifted military men

and women in a generation,

he has adopted a policy in Iraq that is a disaster.

The President argues that the surge is succeeding, but with every

welcome development he cites there is an equally unwelcome development

that gives lie to the claim that we are making any progress. For

example, while death squad violence against Iraqis is down in some

Baghdad neighborhoods where we have surged, suicide bombings have

increased by 30 percent over the last 6 weeks. Violence is up

dramatically in the belt ringing Baghdad. The civilian death toll has

increased 15 percent from February to March. When we squeeze a water

balloon in one place, it bulges somewhere else. Moqtada al-Sadr has not

been seen, but he has been heard, rallying his followers with anti-

American messages and his thugs to take on American troops in the

south. Last week, he pulled his ministers from the coalition

government, and intelligence experts believe his militia is simply

waiting out the surge.

Closing markets to vehicles has precluded some car bombs, but it also

has prompted terrorists to change tactics and walk in with suicide

vests. The road to the airport to Baghdad may be safer, but the skies

above it are more lethal; witness the ironic imposition of ``no-fly

zones'' for our own helicopters.

Tal Affar is the most damaging evidence of the absolute absurdity of

this policy. The President cites it as progress.

Architects of the President's plan called Tal Affar a model because

in 2005 we surged about 10,000 Americans and Iraqis to pacify the city.

Then we left, just as our troops will have to leave the Baghdad

neighborhoods after calm is established, if it is.

But what happened in Tal Affar? It was the scene of some of the most

horrific sectarian violence to date. A massive truck bomb aimed at the

Shiite community led to a retaliatory rampage by Shiite death squads,

aided by Iraqi police. Hundreds were killed. The population of Tal

Affar, which was 200,000 people just a year or two ago, is down to

80,000.

There is an even more basic problem with the President's progress

report, and it goes to the heart of the choices we now face in Iraq.

Whatever tactical progress we may be making will amount to nothing if

it is not serving a larger strategy for success. The administration's

strategy has virtually no prospect for success, and his strategy, in a

nutshell, is the hope that the surge will buy President Maliki's

government time to broker the sustainable political settlement that our

own military views as essential, and that is premised upon the notion

of a central government in Baghdad with real power.

But there is no trust within the government, no trust of the

government by the people it purports to serve, and no capacity on the

part of the government to deliver security or services. There is

little, if any, prospect that this government will build that trust and

capacity any time soon.

How many times have colleagues heard, beginning in January, how there

is an oil agreement, that they have gotten that deal? Has anybody seen

that deal, after we heralded it time and again as essential to pulling

this country together?

In short, the most basic premise of the President's approach--that

the Iraqi people will rally behind a strong central government, headed

by Maliki, in fact will look out for their interests equitably--is

fundamentally and fatally flawed. It will not happen in anybody's

lifetime here, including the pages'.

If the President won't look at a program that is different than he is

now pursuing if his plan doesn't work, what will he do? History

suggests there are only a couple of ways, when there is a self-

sustaining cycle of sectarian violence, to end it, and it is not to put

American troops in the middle of a city of 6.2 million people to try to

quell a civil war.

Throughout history, four things have worked. You occupy the country

for a generation or more. Well, that is not in our DNA. We are not the

Persian Empire or British Empire. You can install a dictator, after

having removed one. Wouldn't that be the ultimate irony for the U.S. to

do that after taking one down. You can let them fight it out until one

side massacres the other--not an option in that tinder box part of the

world. Lastly, you make federalism work for the Iraqis. You give them

control over the fabric of their daily lives. You separate the parties,

you give them breathing room, and let them control their local police,

their education, their religion, and their marriage. That is the only

possibility. We can help Iraq change the focus to a limited central

government and a Federal system, which their constitution calls for. I

cannot guarantee that my strategy will work, but I can guarantee that

the road the President has us on leads to nowhere with no end in sight.

We have to change course to end this war responsibly. That is what we

are trying to do in Congress. Later this week, we will send to the

President an emergency supplemental bill on Iraq that provides every

dollar our troops need and more than the President requested. It also

provides what the majority of Americans expect and believe is

necessary: a plan to start to bring our troops home and bring this war

to a responsible end, not escalate it indefinitely.

If the President vetoes the emergency spending bill, he is the one

who will be denying our troops the funding they need. He is the one who

will be denying the American people a path out of Iraq. The President's

double talk on Iraq is reaching new heights of hypocrisy. I don't say

that lightly.

On April 16, the President claimed that setting a timetable to start

bringing our troops home would ``legislate defeat.'' Just 2 days after

that, 2 days later, his own Secretary of Defense had this to say:

Then, in arguing against the supplemental, the President claimed that

by sending him a bill he would somehow be forced to veto, the military

would run out of money for Iraq in mid-April--which is not true, by the

way--and as a result, he would have to extend the tours of duty of the

troops already in Iraq.

Extending those tours, the President said

Unacceptable? The very next day, the administration announced its

plans to do the ``unacceptable'' and extended the tours of every

American ground troop in Iraq by 3 months.

Talk about hypocrisy: Telling us the path out of Iraq is a way which

is forcing him to veto a bill that will require him then to extend

tours because of that veto and that is unacceptable, and the very next

day he extends the tour of every person on the ground. Once one gets

over the hypocrisy, that announcement is an urgent warning that the

administration's policy in Iraq cannot be sustained without doing

terrible long-term damage to our military.

If this administration insists on keeping this many troops in Iraq

until next year, we will have to send soldiers back for third, fourth,

and fifth tours, extend deployment times from 6 months to a year for

marines, from 12 months to 16 to 18 months for the Army. The military

will also be forced to end the practice of keeping troops at home for

at least 1 year between deployments, to fully mobilize the National

Guard and Reserve, and to perpetuate this backdoor draft.

This President is breaking--is breaking--the military. We don't have

to guess at the impact on this relentless readiness, its impact on

retention and recruitment. This month, we learned that recent graduates

of West Point are choosing to leave Active-Duty service at the highest

rate in more than three decades. This administration's policies are

literally driving some of our best and brightest young officers out of

the military.

Instead of working with Democrats in Congress in a way forward, this

President, divorced from reality, is accusing us of emboldening the

enemy and undermining our troops. I have a message for you, Mr.

President: The only thing that is emboldening the enemy is your failed

policy. Mr. President, the only mission you have accomplished is

emboldening the enemy with your failed policy.

Instead of escalating the war with no end in sight, we have to start

bringing this to a responsible conclusion. If the administration

insists on keeping this many troops next year, we are in serious,

serious jeopardy.

I conclude by saying that I believe it is my obligation as a

Senator--and I hope the obligation of everyone else--to keep

relentless, unending pressure on this President to come to grips with

reality, to continually push every single day to say: Mr. President,

stop; stop this policy of yours.

It is my hope, even though he is likely to veto this bill, that we

will keep the pressure on and ultimately convince at least a dozen of

our Republican colleagues it is time to stop backing the President and

start backing the troops. It is time, Mr. President, to begin to

responsibly bring this war to an end.