Mr. President, I have listened intently over the past

few weeks as the President, members of his Cabinet, and Members of this

Chamber have discussed Iraq, the war on terror, and ways to strengthen

our national security.

For years, now, I have opposed this administration's policies in Iraq

as a diversion from the fight against terrorism. But I have never been

so sure of the fact that this administration misunderstands the nature

of the threats that face our country. I am also more sure than ever and

it gives me no pleasure to say this--that this President is incapable

of developing and executing a national security strategy that will make

our country safer.

As we marked the fifth anniversary of 9/11 this month, we recalled

that tragic day and the lives that were lost in New York, at the

Pentagon, and in Pennsylvania. And we all recalled the anger and

resolve we felt to fight back against those that attacked us. This body

was united and was supportive of the administration's decision to

attack al-Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan. No one disputed that

decision.

That is because our top priority immediately following 9/11 was

defeating the terrorists that attacked us. The American people expected

us to devote most of our national security resources to that effort,

and rightly so. But unfortunately, 5 years later, our efforts to defeat

al-Qaida and its supporters have gone badly astray. The administration

took its eye off the ball. Instead of focusing on the pursuit of al-

Qaida in Afghanistan, it launched a politically motivated diversion

into Iraq--a country with no connection to the terrorists who attacked

us. In fact, the President's decision to invade Iraq has emboldened the

terrorists and has played into their hands by allowing them to falsely

suggest that our fight against terrorism is anti-Muslim and anti-Arab,

when nothing could be further from the truth.

But instead of recognizing that our current policy in Iraq is

damaging our national security, the President continues to argue that

the best way to fight terrorists is to stay in Iraq. He even quotes

terrorists to bolster his argument that Iraq is the central front in

the war on terror. Just recently, he told the country that Osama bin

Laden has proclaimed that the

and that this is Instead of letting the terrorists decide where we will fight them,

the President should remember what he said on September 14, just 2 days

after 9/11. He said, and I quote

The President was right when he said that, and he is

wrong to suggest that we must stay in Iraq because that is where the

terrorists want to fight us. We must fight the terrorists where they

don't want to fight us--and that means engaging in a global campaign,

not focusing all of our resources on one country.

The way to win a war against global terrorist networks is not to keep

140,000 American troops in Iraq indefinitely. We will weaken, not

strengthen, our national security by continuing to pour a

disproportionate level of our military and intelligence and fiscal

resources into Iraq.

Unfortunately, because of our disproportionate focus on Iraq, we are

not using enough of our military and intelligence capabilities for

defeating al-Qaida and other terrorist networks around the world. While

we have been distracted in Iraq, terrorist networks have developed new

capabilities and found new sources of support throughout the world. We

have seen terrorist attacks in India, Morocco, Turkey, Afghanistan,

Indonesia, Spain, Great Britain, and elsewhere. The administration has

failed to adequately address the terrorist safe haven that has

existed for years in Somalia or the recent instability that has

threatened to destabilize the region. And resurgent Taliban forces are

contributing to growing levels of instability in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the U.S. presence in Iraq is being used as a recruiting

tool for terrorist organizations from around the world. In Indonesia,

home to historically moderate Islamic communities, conservative

religious groups are becoming increasingly hostile towards the United

States. In countries like Thailand, Nigeria, Mali, the Philippines, and

elsewhere, militant groups are using U.S. policies in Iraq to fuel

hatred towards the West.

The war in Iraq was, and remains, a war of choice. Some in this body,

even those who have questioned the initial rationale for the war,

suggest that we have no option but to remain in Iraq indefinitely. That

argument is mistaken. We do have a choice, and that is whether we

continue to devote so much of our resources to Iraq or whether we

devote our resources to waging a global campaign against al-Qaida and

its allies. We cannot do both.

If we choose to stay the course in Iraq, that means keeping large

numbers of U.S. military personnel in Iraq indefinitely. It means

continuing to ask our brave service members to somehow provide a

military solution to a political problem, one that will require the

will of the Iraqi people to resolve. Our military has achieved its

mission in Iraq. Until we redeploy from Iraq, our very presence there

will continue to generate new terrorists from around the world that

will come to Iraq to attack U.S. troops.

Staying the course also means that our military's readiness levels

will continue to deteriorate. It means that a disproportionate level of

our military resources will continue to be focused on Iraq while

terrorist networks strengthen their efforts worldwide.

The fight against the Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan, too, will

continue to suffer, as it has since we invaded Iraq. If we stay the

course in Iraq, we won't be able to finish the job in Afghanistan.

Finally, if this were our Nation's choice, the safety of our country

would be uncertain, at best. Terrorist organizations and insurgencies

around the world will continue to use our presence in Iraq as rallying

cry and recruiting slogan. Terrorist networks will continue to increase

their sophistication and reach as our military capabilities are

strained in Iraq.

I think we can see why this approach plays into the terrorists'

hands--and even why bin Laden might suggest that the U.S. presence in

Iraq is beneficial to his cause.

Of course, staying the course isn't a necessity.

The alternative is to establish a new national security strategy that

addresses the wide-ranging nature of the threats that face our country.

This second choice will require replacing our current self-defeating

national security strategy with a comprehensive one to defeat the

terrorist networks that attacked us on 9/11. It will require a

realignment of our finite resources. And it will also require a change

in the way we view and discuss the threat to our country. We must

reject phrases like ``Islamic fascism,'' which are inaccurate and

potentially offensive to peace-loving Muslims around the world. And we

need to understand that there is no ``central front'' in this war, as

the President argues.

The threats to our country are global, unlike any we have encountered

in the past. Our enemy is not a state with clearly defined borders. We

must respond instead to what is a loose network of terrorist

organizations that do not function according to a strict hierarchy. Our

enemy isn't one organization. It is a series of highly mobile, diffuse

entities that operate largely beyond the reach of our conventional

warfighting techniques. The only way to defeat them is to adapt our

strategy and our capabilities and to engage the enemy on our terms and

by using our advantages.

We have proven that we can not do that with our current approach in

Iraq.

This choice--this new strategy--would require redeploying from Iraq

and recalibrating our military posture overseas. It would require

finishing the job in Afghanistan with increased resources, troops, and

equipment. It would require a new form of diplomacy, scrapping the

``transformational diplomacy'' this administration has used to offend,

push away, and ultimately alienate so many of our friends and allies,

and replacing it with an aggressive, multilateral approach that would

leverage the strength of our friends to defeat our common enemies.

It would also require the infusion of new capabilities and strength

for our Armed Forces. By freeing up our special forces assets and

redeploying our military power from Iraq, we would be better positioned

to handle global threats and future contingencies. Our current state of

readiness is unacceptable and must be repaired. Our National Guard,

too, must be capable of responding to natural disasters and future

contingencies.

Finally, this new approach would make our country safer. It would

enable our Government to spend time addressing the wide range of

threats our country faces. It would free up strategic capacity to deal

with Iran, North Korea, and the Middle East, and to provide real

leadership internationally against other enemies we all face, like

poverty, HIV/AIDS, and corruption.

In sum, it would help return the United States to a place of

preeminence in the world and would give us the opportunity to address

the very real threats we face in the 21st century.

The bottom line is that we cannot afford to continue down the path

the President has set forth. We face real threats from al-Qaida and

other terrorist organizations. Accordingly, we need to strengthen our

military, diplomatic, and intelligence capabilities. And we need clear-

sighted leadership with policies aimed at confronting that threat and

with the credibility to mobilize the support of the American people and

the world.

This isn't a choice, it is a necessity.