Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the situation in

Iraq and the continuing efforts of this administration to paint a rosy

picture and to cling to straws when the situation on the ground and

common sense suggest just the opposite.

Some have argued that the surge in Iraq is working, but all you have

to do is look at the facts to know that is not the case. The President

went to Anbar Province, which at the moment he is touting as a place of

success, but we all know what is happening in Iraq. Many other

provinces are in terrible shape. In Iraq, in a certain sense, when you

push on one end of the balloon and make things a little better,

something pops out at another end.

The fallacy of the President's new policy is amazing. Are we placing

our faith in the future of Iraq in the hands of some warlords, some

tribal leaders who at the moment dislike al-Qaida more than they

dislike us? Make no mistake about it: They are no friends of Americans.

Is this the vaunted clarion cry for democracy in the Middle East that

the President announced when he started the buildup in Iraq? Obviously

not. This is a policy of last resort. This is a policy of desperation.

To say at the moment that some warlords in one province in Iraq happen

to be shooting at al-Qaida when 6 months from now they could easily

turn around and resume shooting at Americans, which they did in the

past, is nothing to base a policy on. What kind of policy is it? What

are the odds that 6 months from now, the fragile and perilous situation

in Anbar will reverse itself and collapse? We have heard of success

stories every 6 or 8 months: This province, this town, this city--they

are clear, they are safe. Then, because of the basic facts on the

ground, we revert to the old situation.

Let me be clear. The violence in Anbar has gone down despite the

surge, not because of the surge. The inability of American soldiers to

protect these tribes from al-Qaida said to these tribes: we have to

fight al-Qaida ourselves. It wasn't that the surge brought peace here;

it was that the warlords took peace here, created a temporary peace

here, and that is because there was no one else there protecting them.

As I said, we have heard about successes in the past. They are

temporary. They are not based on any permanent structural change or any

permanent change in the views of Iraqi citizens. We have heard about

success in Baghdad. We have heard about success in Fallujah. We have

heard about success in this province and that province, and it vanishes

like the wind. So now, at a time when the people of America are crying

out for a change in course, are some going to base a temporary

situation in one province--Anbar--based on a few warlords who don't

believe in democracy and who don't like America, as a way to continue

the present misguided policy? It makes no sense.

It makes no sense because the fundamentals in Iraq stay the same.

There is no central government that has any viability. The Shiites, the

Kurds, and the Sunnis dislike one another far more than they like or

want any central government, and these two facts doom the

administration's policy to failure. Only 7 or 8 months ago when the

President began the surge, he said it was to give the present

Government breathing room, to strengthen the Maliki government. Today,

we have more troops, more military patrols, more death, and the Iraqi

Government grows weaker. How can we regard the Bush-Petraeus surge as a

success when its central goal--to strengthen the Government--has

failed? Again, more troops, more American deaths this summer than any

other, and yet the Government is weaker, when the very purpose of the

surge was to strengthen the Government and, in the President's words,

to give it breathing room. By the President's own words, the Government

is suffocating while the surge goes on. It doesn't have breathing room.

Why isn't it apparent to the President? Why isn't it apparent to my

colleagues on the other side of the aisle that the stated goal of the

surge is failing? Strengthening the central government has not

happened. As the surge and the number of troops goes up, the strength

of the central government goes down. That equation says failure in the

Bush-Petraeus surge.

The goal is not a military goal. In the President's own words, it is

to give the Government of Iraq greater stability, greater breathing

room, and that Government, by just about every standard, is worse off

than it was before. Again, because a few warlords and tribal leaders

are now temporarily on our side for the moment, even though they are

not loyal to us, they don't like us and they dislike the central

government, that is why we should continue the present course in Iraq?

It makes no sense.

Then those on the other side of the President say, give us a chance;

you are already declaring defeat. If this were 2003 or 2004 or 2005 or

maybe even 2006, maybe those words would have some resonance with the

American people. But there has been new plan after new plan, new hope

after new hope, and they all are dashed within months. Why? Why? Again,

because the fundamentals on the ground don't change. The Kurds, the

Shiites, the Sunnis dislike one another more than they like any central

government.

If you look at the benchmarks, they show that. The independent GAO

report showed little progress being made in meeting the 18 military and

political benchmarks set out by Congress. The draft report from last

week showed only three of the benchmarks had been met. However, over

the weekend, the Pentagon revised the report and now miraculously an

additional four benchmarks were ``partially met.'' Despite the apparent

efforts by the Pentagon to edit this independent report, it will sadly

take much more than a red pen to correct the failures of the

President's Iraq policy.

So the surge, by the President's own stated goal, has failed. The

central government is weaker. The fundamentals on the ground continue

to deteriorate. There continues to be no loyalty to a central

government in Iraq and no loyalty to Maliki, who seems to almost revel

in his incompetence. The bottom line is very simple: We are worse off,

not better off, not even the same, in Iraq today than we were 6 months

ago. The position of America, the position of democracy, the position

of stability, continues to erode.

If there was ever a need for a change of course in Iraq, it is now. I

plead with my colleagues from the other side of the aisle. You know we

have to change course. The President has thrown you this magical sort

of temporary solution--Anbar Province. Don't be fooled. It is no

different than Fallujah was a few years ago, or Baghdad, or all of

these other ``successes.'' They are not successes because the facts on

the ground are the same.

The American people--three-quarters--cry out for a change of course

in Iraq. The President doesn't hear them. The President doesn't look at

the facts on the ground. The very same fallacies that led us into this

war--that there were weapons of mass destruction and Iraq was at the

center of a nexus of terrorism--are now blinding my colleagues on the

other side of the aisle from changing course in Iraq--the same types of

false statements and pretenses. It is time to change course for the

sake of the soldiers who are valiantly defending us; for the sake of

moving on and having America focus

on other international problems and not have them be exacerbated by the

war in Iraq; for the sake of the $500 billion to $600 billion we spent

that could be spent here on education and health care and

infrastructure; for the sake, ultimately, of the greatness of this

great country of ours, we must change course in Iraq. We must do it

now.