Mr. President, this Friday, April 9, will mark the 1-

year anniversary of the liberation of Iraq from the dictator Saddam

Hussein and his corrupt regime. It was April 9, 2003, that Iraqis

cheered when Saddam Hussein's statue fell in Baghdad.

When we began Operation Iraqi Freedom and as our troops were marching

on Baghdad, we started the Senate every single day for at least 30

minutes talking about our troops, what they were doing, the successes

they had, and the heartrending problems they faced. We let them know

that not 1 day, not 1 hour, not 1 minute passed that we were not

thinking of what they were doing for our country.

It is still the case today. Although Saddam Hussein's regime fell 1

year ago today, we are still fighting with the spirit and the heart

that is personified by our troops on the ground in Iraq today.

At that time, we all talked about--and it was written in the

newspapers and talked about on television--that it did not seem like

that infamous Republican Guard had been there. We did not meet them on

the way to Baghdad. We did not meet them in Baghdad, at least it did

not seem like it. It seemed almost too easy.

This is one person's opinion, but this person believes that when

history is written about this war, it will say that we are meeting the

Republican Guard right now, that they faded into the woodwork and they

strengthened their numbers and they are coming back. They have decided

to make their last stand because we have a deadline of

June 30 when we want the Iraqi people to take control of their

governance, and we want the people to have a say. We set that deadline.

All of those who do not want freedom and democracy in Iraq, whether

they be people who want control inside Iraq or whether they are people

from outside Iraq who want to control the Middle East and make sure

there is not a working democracy, all of those forces are now coming

together against our coalition forces.

This is a very important time in our war on terrorism, and our hearts

are with our troops on the ground. Our hearts are with their families

right now.

Our hearts are with those brave civilians who have volunteered to go

in to help stabilize the country of Iraq and to get an economy going

there. We know they paid the price from the horrendous pictures we saw

last week. Those volunteers who were trying to serve were not only

murdered in cold blood, but their bodies were defiled. We will never

forget those pictures, and we will never forget the pictures we have

been seeing day after day out of Iraq.

We are here today to say how much we appreciate what they are doing.

We are also here to say that every one of those who have died, they

have not died in vain because we are not going to walk away from this

battle. America will not cut and run and render those great losses

meaningless. We will not do it because we have a President who is

willing to stand firm in the face of adversity. Our President is

supported by troops who are every bit as committed and dedicated as he

is to the cause.

This is a very important time. I think it is so important that we

should look at what is happening and make sure we are not doing

anything which would hurt our cause while our troops are in harm's way.

I have to say I am troubled when I hear leaders say this is another

Vietnam. We have troops on the ground in harm's way. Is it really

productive for us to be labeling Iraq after 1 year as another Vietnam?

Is it helpful to heap criticism on our President? Is it even helpful to

be dissecting what happened in the run-up on the war on terrorism that

began on September 11, 2001? Is it helpful to be saying who is at fault

for bad information? Was it the Clinton administration or the Bush

administration? Or was it before that? Is that what we ought to be

talking about right now? I don't think so.

I think what we ought to be talking about right now is how we can

come together as a country and make sure everyone in America

understands the importance of this cause; that we support our Commander

in Chief, and that we support our troops on the ground.

I have been to Iraq. Mr. President, you have been to Iraq. Our

Commander in Chief has been to Iraq. We know a little bit about what it

is like. We don't know everything because we are not there when the

bombs go off. We are not there when the missiles are launched. But we

have been there, and we know our troops are the best. They are

committed. They are doing exactly what needs to be done to stabilize

this country.

It is not going to be easy. But the one thing we must all do is be

committed to the proposition we can't fail, and dividing our country in

half over who was responsible for faulty intelligence is one way we

could fail.

What we need to be doing is uniting our country. This is America's

challenge. This is our coalition's challenge, that we will stay the

course. We will make sure a constitution is in place in Iraq so the

people who have been oppressed for so many years, so the girls in

Afghanistan who have been abused and uneducated will have the chance

for lives all of us dream for our children to have, so the people in

Iraq who were raped, tortured, and mutilated by Saddam Hussein and his

regime will no longer have to fear that kind of treatment because they

will be in control of their own destiny. We will be there with the

security to help them see this through.

What we need right now is a united country, not a country sniping at

our President, whether it is on the Senate floor or out in the field.

My time is up. But I think it is not productive for us to be divisive

at this point. We need to be united in support of our Commander in

Chief and our troops on the ground.