Mr. President, the American people have demanded a

new direction in Iraq, and the momentum building toward that change is

strong. It is not difficult to understand why. More than 3,600 brave

American troops have lost their lives. Tens of thousands have returned

home gravely injured--gravely injured. The war now costs Americans $10

billion every month in Iraq, with total spending now exceeding that of

the Vietnam war. It has ruined our international standing.

Despite all this, little has changed on the ground. Violence has

worsened. Sectarian fighting goes on virtually unabated, with deadly

attacks taking a severe and relentless toll. While courageous Americans

die, Iraqi politicians argue and stall.

Leaving U.S. troops caught in the morass of Iraq has not made that

country more secure and, more important, it does not make our country

more secure. To stay President Bush's course will continue to cost our

men and women in uniform their lives and their physical and mental

health. It will continue to drain our national Treasury and further

erode what little good will remains for America around the world. It

will leave our military with overstrained troops, overstressed

families, and equipment and resources in disrepair. We are breaking our

military in Iraq.

It is time for a change. The American people know this. Democrats

and, to their credit, many Republicans in this Congress know this.

Anyone who is listening or looking with clear eyes knows this. Yet

after years of misjudgments, years of misleading slogans, years of

misplaced priorities, and years of failure, this President still

refuses to do what he must do: Change course in Iraq and bring our

courageous American troops home.

Just the other day, the President reasserted his intention to stay

the course, to continue this war indefinitely, an open-ended

commitment, a blank check, with no prospects for redeployment or a new

direction. Again, President Bush has failed to listen to the millions

of Americans who have called on him and who have called on us to bring

the war to an end. Enough is enough. It is time for a change.

Mr. President, a Member of this body recently said this about our

Nation's course in Iraq:

I happen to agree with those words spoken by the very distinguished

Senator, Richard Lugar of Indiana, but what I like the most about them

is the voice of reason and thoughtfulness they impart to this debate.

There has been too little of that to date. The questions we face over

this war in Iraq are serious questions, and they demand seriousness and

reason from those who would grapple with them. Senator Lugar's

statement reflects that thoughtfulness, reflects that reason, in the

midst of a debate which has all too often been characterized by a lack

of those characteristics.

Look at this administration, which too often communicates not with

reason but with slogans and sound bites:

People

watching this continuing debate, mark when you hear the phrase

You are hearing the end of reason, and

sloganeering. This is no service to the people of our country, not when

serious and difficult problems must be solved. Just look where this

slogan leadership has gotten us so far. It is a dishonor roll of

failure: weapons of mass destruction, nonexistent; occupation planning,

incompetence; reconstruction efforts, failed; the strain on our troops

and their families, disabling; the treatment of our wounded troops,

disgraceful; expenditures, massive; fraud, run rampant; the confidence

of the American people, forfeited after cascades of false optimism and

phony good news.

It is time, as Senator Lugar's words exemplify, to pursue

intelligent, thoughtful, and realistic decisions about our course in

Iraq, decisions that will protect our national interest. It is time to

put the slogans away and thoughtfully extricate ourselves from a

disastrous mess.

I hope we can take these steps forward in the Senate together. I am

encouraged that several Republican friends have stated clearly that

they cannot support the President's failed course in Iraq and are

seeking real change.

As I have said many times in this Chamber, our strategy to effect

change in Iraq requires the rapid and responsible redeployment of our

troops. As I told the President directly when I met with him several

months ago, I see the prospect of U.S. redeployment as the most

powerful force at our disposal in this conflict now. That prospect of

redeployment of American troops will eliminate the insurgents' argument

that America is an occupying army, taking away from them a powerful

recruiting tool for militant extremists. It will spur Iraq's political

leaders to step forward, to quit slow-walking us through their own

civil war and take responsibility for the security and governance of

their own country. It will confront neighboring nations with a real

impetus to assume more positive roles in assuring the region's

stability. It will help restore the faith of the world in the

leadership, the integrity, the good judgment, and the good will of our

great country.

The President's surge plan is not the new direction Americans are

calling for. It is a tactic--a tactic that can only be effective as

part of a larger coherent strategy. And strategy, in turn, largely

depends on whether the overarching dynamic works in America's favor. In

this regard, America is presently on the worst possible footing.

A redeployment of our troops creates the potential to change this

overarching dynamic for the better, freeing us to focus on more

effective strategies to counter al-Qaida and to stabilize the region.

Iraqi leaders will have to reach compromises with each other because

their vision for their country's future will no longer be drawn with a

major U.S. military presence in it. In the time it will take to bring

our massive deployment of troops home, we can send a clear signal to

Iraqi leaders and to Iraq's neighbors that America is standing down and

it is time for them to stand up. We can help them do that.

This is a critical step, and thoughtful, reasoned, political, and

diplomatic leadership will be essential to take advantage of the new

dynamic a redeployment offers. I will confess that I am deeply troubled

that this administration may not have the credibility it needs to

accomplish this difficult task, even if it were of a mind to try.

This Congress can help set favorable conditions for executive action.

We cannot legislate diligence, we cannot legislate thoughtfulness, we

cannot legislate competence, and it is not clear that this

administration is viewed as capable of those qualities any longer. It

may take new faces and new voices to represent our country credibly in

this process. Fortunately, there are many talented and accomplished

people in this country whose perspectives and experience can help build

America's credibility and prestige around the world. It will be a

significant diplomatic challenge, but it presents a significant--

perhaps historic--diplomatic opportunity.

That executive responsibility--the need to put ourselves in that

diplomatic arena--does not relieve us in the Senate of our duty to

continue to press forcefully on behalf of the millions of Americans who

demanded a change in Iraq, to apply reason, thought, and our best care

and judgment to a problem that has not yielded to sloganeering. We will

keep the pressure on this President and his administration, whose

inability to admit failure is leading our precious Nation deeper and

deeper into disaster in Iraq.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.