Mr. President, 4 years ago today, President Bush landed

on the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln in his flight suit. The banner behind him

proudly said, ``Mission accomplished.'' President Bush announced to the

world, and to the American people, that

I can think of almost no greater act of hubris, arrogance, and denial

than the declaration of mission accomplished in Iraq 4 years ago. It is

truly stunning how false that statement was.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished.

Yet, since that time, 3,000 U.S. troops have been killed in Iraq. Over

104 American troops died in April alone, making it the deadliest month

since last December.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished.

Yet we have now spent over $450 billion on the war in Iraq. This war is

costing us almost 10 times what the Bush administration initially said

it would.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished.

Yet we have now been in Iraq for nearly 50 months, longer than the

United States was in World War II.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished.

Yet U.S. troop fatalities are up 33 percent since the President's

escalation of the war in January.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished.

Yet today, Iraqi civilian casualties are estimated to be in the tens or

even hundreds of thousands. It is impossible to know how many have been

killed in Iraq, but the United Nations estimates that 35,000 civilians

have been killed.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished.

Yet today oil production in Iraq is still 15 percent lower than it was

before the war.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished.

Yet Baghdad is only getting 6 hours of electricity a day, significantly

less than before the war.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished.

Yet the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction just put out

a new report detailing how projects the administration declared a

``success'' are actually failing and no longer operating.

Frankly, it reminds me of all the other ways we were misled by this

administration. Let us remember what this administration told us about

this war. Let us remember the Iraq myths. Remember the unfound weapons

of mass destruction; remember the missing mobile weapons labs; remember

the yellowcake uranium in Africa; remember Saddam's nonexistent vast

stockpiles of chemical weapons; remember when Secretary Rumsfeld told

us that remember

the nonexistent link between al-Qaida and Saddam; remember the claims

that Iraqi oil and other countries, not the United States taxpayer,

would pay for the cost of reconstruction; remember when the

administration told us the war would cost only between $50 billion and

$60 billion; remember when Paul Wolfowitz said

to think we would need several hundred thousand troops in Iraq; and

remember when President Bush told us on May 1, 2003, that `

This is the same administration that now comes to this Congress and

says: Trust us. This is the same administration that says: Trust us,

our new escalation plan will work. This is the same administration that

tells this Congress and the American people to be patient, to give

their ``new'' plan to escalate the war time to work.

Yet their new plan is more of the same. To quote one of the witnesses

who testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

That is what they thought then when the witness testified, but

eventually it has been a lot more than 20,000 troops.

Well, the American people and this Congress have run out of patience.

This administration has run out of credibility to ask for more time or

another chance, when all we are largely doing is staying the course.

Frankly, I find it insulting that this administration thinks this

Congress would simply go along with their escalation plan without

question.

Why should we support President Bush's escalation--a plan with

benchmarks but no real consequences? As I have said time and time

again, benchmarks without consequences are simply aspirations. We have

seen countless misguided plans from this administration, but the Iraqis

have never been held accountable.

We were told by the end of 2006 a provincial election law would be

approved. But that benchmark has not been met. We were told that Iraqis

would approve a law for de-Baathification. But that benchmark has not

been met.

We were told that Iraqis would create a law to help restrain

sectarian militias. But that benchmark, too, has not been met.

We were told the Iraqis would establish a law to regulate the oil

industry and share revenues, which is one of the critical elements to

be able to achieve reconciliation in Iraq, the sharing of the nation's

national resources. But that benchmark has not been met.

We were told that, by March, the Iraqi Government was supposed to

hold a referendum on constitutional amendments. But that benchmark has

not been met.

Time and again, the Iraqi Government has fallen short; and time and

again, this administration has looked the other way--basing their plans

on the hope that the Iraqis will step up. Continuing this failed policy

in Iraq based on the mere hope that things will improve is not good

enough. The broken promises must stop.

It also seems to me the President is once again out of touch about

our progress on the ground and his escalation plan. The President said

last week:

This is very much like ``mission accomplished.'' Yet, last Monday, an

attack carried out by a suicide bomber near Baqubah killed 9 soldiers

and wounded 20 others. The explosion was one of the deadliest single

ground attacks on American forces since the start of the war.

Two weeks ago, five different bombs exploded in Baghdad, killing at

least 171 people. These attacks mark the deadliest day in the capital

city since the new security plan was implemented 2 months ago.

In fact, almost four coalition soldiers have been killed per day in

the past month--the highest rate since January of 2005. As I pointed

out before, over 100 soldiers were killed in April, including 9 killed

over the weekend, 1 of only 6 times that more than 100 service members

were killed in 1 month since the start of the war.

Violence outside of Baghdad is on the rise, with more than twice the

number of American troops killed in the past 5 months in Diyala

Province than were killed all of last year.

In terms of civilians, over 1,500 Iraqis were killed between February

14 and April 12. That is almost 500 more people than were killed during

the previous 2 months.

Frankly, I don't believe the President's escalation plan is working.

So I say to the President: The era of blank checks is over and the time

of congressional oversight has begun.

The President would largely want us to send him a blank check. We

have spent 10 times more than we were told we would spend on this war,

and there is no end in sight in terms of lives and national treasure.

That is why this Senate and the House sent the President an Iraq

spending bill with a responsible timeline for withdrawing our troops

from Iraq. I believe the President is making a serious mistake with his

plan to veto the bill.

Some on the other side of the aisle like to point out that the

President is the Commander in Chief. I remind my friends the

Constitution puts the Congress in charge of appropriating funds. The

Constitution, in article I, section 8, provides what scholars call the

power of the purse, and it says:

Congress has the power and the

right and the obligation to make sure we spend the taxpayers' money

wisely.

In a recent editorial, Leon Panetta, a member of the Iraq Study

Group, reminded us the President has stated the goal of our involvement

is for Iraq to be able to

In order for us to get to that point, we need to hold Iraqis

accountable for meeting the benchmarks they helped set. The emergency

supplemental bill that passed the House and the Senate does just that,

by including a plan to redeploy U.S. forces in relation to progress

made by the Iraqi Government in achieving security and diplomatic

benchmarks.

Leon Panetta also said:

The Iraq supplemental sends a strong message to the Iraqis that it is

their responsibility to take control of their own country and that our

involvement in Iraq is not indefinite.

Vetoing the supplemental sends the message to the Iraqis that they do

not have to take responsibility and that our troops will be in Iraq

indefinitely. But staying in Iraq isn't in the national interest or

national security of the United States.

Our troops are caught in the middle of a civil war they cannot solve.

Keeping more troops there will only put them directly in the middle of

an Iraqi fight. Keeping our troops there is trying to solve a political

problem with a military solution. Staying in Iraq actually keeps the

Iraqis from taking responsibility for their actions.

Frankly, what we hear from the other side doesn't make sense. They

talk about victory, but what is the definition of ``victory''? Is that

the victory we have heard is around the corner? They talk about

benchmarks for the Iraqis, but they set no consequences.

Four years after the President declared ``mission accomplished,'' 4

years and over 3,000 Americans lives later, 4 years and over $450

billion later, 4 years with no new plan for Iraq, just more of the

same, 4 years after the President declared ``mission accomplished,'' I

ask: How many more lives must we lose and how much more money must we

spend?

I close by asking: When will this administration finally understand

that ``mission accomplished'' was a myth of their own imagination, born

of delusion and denial, yet another terrible mistake in a series of

tragic errors? When will we finally hear the words ``major combat in

Iraq has ended'' and know they are true?

I yield the floor.