Mr. President, in recent weeks, Americans have witnessed

a steady stream of reports that raise grave questions about the

accuracy of statements made by senior Bush administration officials

leading up to the war in Iraq.

The unequivocal administration pronouncements that Saddam Hussein

possessed weapons of mass destruction, was pursuing nuclear

capabilities, and had close ties with al-Qaida have not been proven or

been proven unequivocally wrong.

Implications of these intelligence failures are far-reaching. While

Saddam Hussein may be in prison, just this week CIA Director Tenet

indicated America is still the target of terrorists who seek to kill as

many Americans as possible in any way available to them.

At no time in our Nation's history has the integrity of the people

who use intelligence and the people who produce intelligence been more

vital to national security. Americans need to have confidence in both

our policymakers and our intelligence community. To rebuild that

confidence, Americans have a right to know how the administration and

how our intelligence community could have been so wrong on matters of

such grave import.

For a failure this massive, every aspect of America's national

security policymaking process should be put under the microscope: How

we collect information, how we analyze it, how it gets interpreted by

administration officials, and how the Senate performs its oversight

responsibilities.

Much of the discussion about our Iraq intelligence failures thus far

has focused on our incorrect assessments of the threat posed by Saddam

Hussein. While important, there is another vital piece of this story

that has been overlooked until this point. That is, the

administration's failure to plan for postwar Iraq and the consequences

that would arise from toppling Saddam Hussein.

The administration's myopic approach to planning for post-Saddam Iraq

continues to have consequences for the safety of our troops and the

long-term security of our Nation and its interests. As a result, it is

critical that the Nation learn more about why the administration failed

to plan for the contingencies of a post-Saddam Iraq. As officials from

the Bush administration, the United Nations, and the Iraq Governing

Council seek to reach agreement on the administration's third and

latest proposal for forming the first official post-Saddam government,

we would be wise to look back at what went wrong.

A thorough, bipartisan investigation is warranted.

What makes the unfolding evidence of insufficient post-war planning

most troubling is that, in this instance, contrary to the questions of

weapons of mass destruction, it appears that our intelligence was

right.

There was a consensus among the intelligence community that removing

Saddam would be the easiest part of our efforts to secure and rebuild

Iraq.

Our intelligence community, our military, and numerous independent

groups all concurred in the assessment that our gravest challenges

would come in the days after Saddam was ousted.

The greatest difficulty, all agreed, would come in the days following

the toppling of Saddam Hussein. Senior administration policymakers were

repeatedly warned by other officials within the government, as well as

a raft of independent outside experts, to plan accordingly.

Months before the start of the conflict, these officials and experts

carefully examined these issues and offered concrete proposals to

maximize our chances for bringing about a stable Iraq while minimizing

the risks to our troops and our taxpayers.

For instance, as far back as March 2002, a year before the invasion,

the State Department was working on a $5 million project entitled the

Future of Iraq. Experience from previous conflicts demonstrated the

importance of preparing in advance for our postwar duties.

And experience from the past gave us all a guide as to what to expect

in Iraq.

Although there were many other officials and organizations making

similar assessments, the State Department's Future of Iraq project

provides some useful insights into the information available to the

administration had it chose to listen.

In its 13-volume study plus a one-volume summary and overview, the

Future of Iraq project reached some prescient conclusions.

First, the project said Iraq would be disorderly after liberation and

stressed that the days immediately after liberation would be critical--

to both those who seek to work with us and those who do not.

Second, this report stressed the importance of restoring basic

services as quickly as possible after the regime change. The report

``stressed the importance of getting the electrical grid up and running

immediately--[this is] key to water systems, jobs. [This] could go a

long way to determining Iraqis attitudes' toward coalition forces.''

Third, the report warned about the problems created by a wholesale

demobilization of the Iraqi military.

Each of these conclusions should have waved a red flag to

administration officials: if addressed effectively, the transition will

be smoother; if ignored, the transition will be more difficult. More

difficult for our troops and more difficult for the Iraqi people.

Unfortunately, the administration apparently chose to ignore these

and many other similar findings offered up by other groups. In fact,

news reports indicate that White House and senior Defense Department

civilian officials actually worked to exclude people who worked on or

shared the views contained in the Future of Iraq report--views that

have proven to be 100 percent correct.

One of the most comprehensive reports about this issue can be found

in James Fallows' article in the January/February 2004 Atlantic Monthly

entitled ``Blind into Baghdad.''

I highly commend this article to my colleagues.

Unfortunately, the many warnings about post-war Iraq fell upon deaf

ears in the administration. For a variety of reasons, senior

administration officials in the White House and senior civilians in the

Defense Department ignored these warnings, instead apparently opting to

rely on dubious sources to back up their rosy predictions about how our

troops would be received by Iraqis and how smooth the transition would

be.

For example, the administration was repeatedly pressed for an

estimate before the start of the war on the number of troops and the

cost of the operation.

Even though press reports indicate administration officials had

signed off on a war plan in November 2002 that spelled out the size of

the forces necessary for an Iraq mission, the administration

persistently claimed not to know the size of the forces needed or their

cost.

As late as February 2003, 2 months after the President had authorized

the deployment of 200,000 troops to the region and less than 2 months

before the start of the conflict, Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz

said, ``Fundamentally, we have no idea what is needed unless and until

we get there on the ground.''

Even worse, the administration suggested that there would be no cost

at all.

Administration officials stated that the proceeds from the sale of

Iraqi oil would be used to pay for the American military presence.

On March 27, 8 days after the war had started, Wolfowitz was again

pressed on a figure and indicated that whatever it turned out to be,

Iraq's oil supplies would keep it low: ``There's a lot of money to pay

for this. It doesn't have to be U.S. taxpayer money. We are dealing

with a country that can really finance its own reconstruction and

relatively soon.''

In April, after more than a month of conflict, Andrew Natsios, the

director of USAID, said the total cost to the taxpayer would be no more

than $1.7 billion. ``We have no plans for any further-on-funding for

this.''

The administration either knew better at the time or should have

known better.

And our troops and the American people certainly deserved better.

Over 500 Americans have been killed and over 3,000 wounded in Iraq.

Unfortunately, these numbers are likely to continue to grow before our

mission there is complete.

We have already appropriated over $150 billion for this operation,

and this cost could easily double before we are through.

Let me take another example--the administration's statements about

the post-war environment we would encounter and the challenges we would

face.

Although there are a few instances where administration officials

went on the record before the war warning that a war with Iraq could

require a lengthy commitment, administration officials repeatedly

painted the most optimistic portrait possible in order to gain support

for its strategy.

Vice President Cheney's remarks 3 days before the start of the war

typify much of what the administration was telling the American public.

When asked if the American people are prepared for a long, costly

battle with significant casualties, the Vice President said, ``Well, I

don't think it's likely to unfold that way . . . because I really do

believe we will be greeted as liberators.''

This tragic miscalculation allowed the administration to abandon the

intelligence-based, analytical process needed to plan successfully for

the occupation of Iraq. The administration sent a smaller force than

our senior military officials initially recommended.

Our personnel were not suitably prepared for the immense economic,

social, and political complexities that we should have known would

inevitably arise after the fall of Saddam Hussein. And our troops and

the American people were not adequately equipped for the guerrilla

tactics that have become all too common since President Bush declared

an end to major combat operations.

Overall, the administration's overly optimistic attitude about post-

war Iraq has contributed to a far more costly and arduous effort than

needed to be the case.

Mr. President, not long ago, many of my colleagues and I had the

honor of having dinner with more than 100 soldiers and their families

at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. These soldiers had all been wounded

while serving their country in Iraq. I hope my colleagues will take the

opportunity to visit these young men and women. After seeing first-hand

the kind of people our country has produced, I have never been more

proud to be an American.

As I think of my night with these brave men and women who have

sacrificed so much and asked for so little in return, I cannot help but

think: Did we do right by them? Did we do everything possible to put

them in a position to succeed at the least possible risk? Did we

provide them with a plan for success and the tools needed to carry it

out?

In a statement last year, General Anthony Zinni, one of the most

respected and distinguished military leaders this country has produced,

commented on what we owed those who we placed in harm's way.

He said:

The administration based its post-war planning on blind hope, and

hope is not a plan. We owe it to our troops and ourselves to determine

whether we did everything we could to succeed in Iraq. Our success in

Iraq and future conflicts depends on it. Our need to ensure that we do

right by our troops demands it.

I yield the floor.