Mr. President, we are considering the supplemental

appropriations bill. I spoke earlier about the agricultural disaster

piece in that bill. I believe other colleagues will be over to talk

about that as well. My colleague, Senator Feinstein from California,

just finished discussing it. She was a major cosponsor of it. I have

indicated previously that my colleague, Senator Conrad, is coming. He

worked to create a coalition of interest and support of the

agricultural disaster piece. So when others come, I expect we will have

more discussion about this important issue.

I wish to talk for a moment about the supplemental appropriations

bill and the issue of Iraq. Earlier, one of my colleagues was

describing the issue of Iraq and the controversy that the Congress

might get involved and somehow interfere and that there cannot be 535

commanders in chief. I understand that. I wish to make a couple of

points about Iraq, however.

The issue of Iraq, as you know, casts a shadow on virtually

everything else in this country. We are spending, in terms of the lives

of American soldiers and America's treasure, an unbelievable amount

with respect to the war in Iraq. All of us want this country to

succeed. There is nobody here who doesn't want America to succeed in

whatever we are involved in.

I wish to make this point: The National Intelligence Estimate has

just been completed. There is a classified and an unclassified version.

The unclassified version tells all of us and the American people that

what is happening in Iraq is largely sectarian violence. It is not a

fight against the ``terrorists.'' It is sectarian violence--Shia

trying to kill Sunni, Sunni trying to kill Shia. That is a civil war by

classic definition. That is what we face in Iraq. There is an al-Qaida

presence in Al Anbar Province. We understand that. What is happening

there is largely a civil war.

Now, the head of our intelligence services in this country testified

twice. The former head, Mr. Negroponte, and the current head have

testified within the last 2 1/2 months. Both of them have said exactly

the same thing. They have both said the greatest terrorist threat to

this country is al-Qaida, its networks around the world, and its

determination to strike us in our homeland. So the greatest threat to

our homeland is from the terrorist group al-Qaida. Both have described

al-Qaida as operating in a safe hideaway in northern Pakistan.

If the greatest threat to our country is al-Qaida, if the leadership

of al-Qaida is directing threats against our homeland and they are in a

secure hideaway in northern Pakistan, if that is the greatest threat to

our homelend, and if, in fact, what is happening in Iraq, according to

the National Intelligence Estimate, is a civil war, then I think the

question is, What better protects our country? Is it beginning to

extract from a civil war? After all, the Iraqi people have seen Saddam

Hussein executed. They have seen the opportunity to vote for their own

new Constitution. They have been given the opportunity to vote for

their own new Government. The only question remaining is, Do those same

people have the will to provide for their own security? So the question

is, What better protects our country? Is it the opportunity to extract

from a civil war at some point soon or is it the determination to

ignore the presence of the al-Qaida leadership in northern Pakistan?

If we begin to withdraw and extract from a civil war in Iraq, do we

then have a better capability to keep our eye on the ball, the greatest

threat to our country, the leadership of al-Qaida and their network

around the world? If that were the case, wouldn't this country wish to

begin to take action against the greatest threat to our homeland and

threat to our security, the leadership of al-Qaida?

That is not me describing that. That is from the National

Intelligence Estimate, the combined judgment of the intelligence

communities in our Government.

You can make a pretty strong case that Osama bin Laden, who boasted

about murdering innocent Americans on 9/11/2001--he still speaks to us

from time to time from a ``secure hideaway,'' as described by the head

of our intelligence. Al-Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden, after all of

these years having passed since 9/11, still exist. Their leadership

apparently is still intact, according to the head of our national

intelligence services. We generally know where they are. They are

apparently in a country that is supposed to be cooperating with us--

Pakistan.

The question is, Why have we not brought to justice the leadership of

al-Qaida, if that is our greatest threat? The answer, I suppose, is

because this country has 140,000-plus soldiers in Iraq prosecuting a

war in the middle of what is now a civil war in Iraq.

We can debate forever, perhaps, the conditions that got us to this

point--terrible intelligence, the most unbelievable intelligence

failure, perhaps, in the history of this country. This country told the

world that the country of Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction

that threatened America. Now it turns out, we understand, to take one

example, that the issue of mobile chemical weapons laboratories--that

intelligence was given to us by German authorities. That came from a

fabricator who is now alleged to have been a drunk--a single source,

perhaps drunk, fabricator persuades this country to tell the world Iraq

has mobile chemical labs. But it turns out they didn't.

I could go on at great length about the intelligence failures.

Whatever the intelligence failures were, we went to Iraq. This country

went to Iraq, and a number of things have happened. We have unearthed

mass graves. Several hundred thousand Iraqis were murdered by a brutal

regime headed by Saddam Hussein. There are a number of brutal regimes

in this world. We don't take it upon ourselves--unless it is in our

national interest--to send troops to those brutal regimes. But Saddam

Hussein was, in fact, a brutal dictator. He has been executed. The

world is better for that. The country of Iraq has shed itself of a

brutal dictator. His execution comes amid other opportunities for the

people of Iraq. They have a constitution, a brandnew one; they wrote it

and voted for it. They have a new government. They have created and

voted for that government. And now we have tens and tens and tens of

thousands of American soldiers in Iraq, in the middle of a civil war.

We have taken our eye off the ball because the issue really is the

terrorist organizations that wish to commit acts of terror against our

country. The head of our national intelligence says that al-Qaida is

the greatest terrorist threat to our country. They are in secure

hideaways in northern Pakistan. It seems to me that the ability to

begin to extract ourselves from the middle of a civil war in Iraq gives

us the opportunity to put pressure on and work with other countries to

bring to justice the greatest terrorist threat to this country, the

terrorist organization that murdered Americans on 9/11/2001. That ought

to be our overriding goal. If that is the greatest terrorist threat, it

seems to me our most important job is to eliminate that threat, and

sooner rather than later.

So I end where I began. No one in this Chamber has a difference of

opinion about whether we want our country to succeed. We love our

country, and we want to succeed. We honor our soldiers, and we insist,

when we send America's sons and daughters to war, that they have all

the things they need and the support they need to do their job. But

from a policy perspective, I believe this President has made very

serious mistakes.

One of my colleagues, this morning, said the general will tell us

whether things are going well. I cannot tell you how many briefings I

have been in--top-secret briefings--month after month after month and

year after year in which the top generals have come to us and said

things are going really very well, when, in fact, that hasn't been the

case. Only later have we discovered it was not the case; it never was

the case.

It seems to me that this country has to evaluate what it can do at

this point to begin to find a way to withdraw and extract from a civil

war in Iraq. Perhaps there needs to be partitioning, I don't know. I

know that is a tough subject to introduce these days. But if there are

no alternatives, perhaps you have to partition the parties fighting

each other, the Sunnis and Shias, and try to find another device to

deal with the issue.

In any event, it seems to me it is in this country's best interest to

keep our eye on the ball, and the ball here is, according to head of

our intelligence, that the greatest terrorist threat to our country is

the leadership of al-Qaida and their network. We have not, in my

judgment, with respect to al-Qaida and the deepening problems of the

Taliban in Afghanistan, kept our eye on the ball. That is one of the

reasons there needs to be a change.

This notion of ``stay the course'' or ``cut and run,'' which was the

slogan--there is the slogan of the week or the slogan of the month. The

administration's slogan of the month last year was ``stay the course''

or ``cut and run.'' It was always a false choice that was never a

substitute for thoughtful debate. It was a thoughtless chant of things

that mattered very little.

What matters most to this country is that we are engaged in pursuits

which will provide opportunity to strengthen this country, which do

honor and justice to the efforts of our soldiers, and which relate to

responding to the terrorist threat because the threat against this

country is a very serious, abiding, long-term threat. All of us want to

succeed in dealing with that threat.

Mr. President, one of my colleagues, Senator Conrad, has arrived. I

think he intends to speak on this agricultural disaster issue. Let me

at this point yield the floor, and I think other colleagues will speak

on the agricultural disaster piece I spoke on earlier.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.