Mr. President, I salute my colleague from Minnesota

for his strong leadership on this issue and his great insight into what

is happening today in a very complex world.

As I listened to the news yesterday and today and read the newspapers

this morning, we are reminded again of several things. First, we are

reminded of what a difficult and complex world it is in which we live.

It is a world where we who want to be a peaceful nation and see peace

throughout the world once again realize the type of peace we hope for

and pray for may be a long and difficult road ahead.

We understand, also, from the standpoint of sacrifice, nothing comes

easy. We are reminded once again that the freedom this Nation enjoys

came at great sacrifice. We are seeing sacrifices around the world

today, particularly of our brave men and women who are fighting for the

freedom of the Iraqi people.

As I think about that and I think about what is going on in Iraq

today and what is happening to an overwhelming majority of the Iraqi

people who want to see peace and who want stability in that country and

they are having to deal with a small number of insurgents who want to

carry the day by using guns and violence, it disturbs me when I hear

statements made by politicians in America, politicians who aspire to

higher office, as well as politicians who have been in the realm of

politics in our country for many years, statements that tend to incite

the opposition and to put our men and women in greater harm's way.

When I was coming along as a young man, I played a lot of athletics.

I have had the privilege of coaching Little League basketball and

baseball for 25 years. When you play athletics or when you coach

athletics, you want to be inspired as an athlete and as a coach. You

want to inspire the opposition. Frankly, the statements I have seen in

the last 24 hours relative to the comparison of Iraq to Vietnam are the

type of statements a coach would take and plaster on the locker room

wall when he wants to charge up his team and he tells the opponents,

Look what is happening on the other side. Morale is decaying. We are

winning.

That is simply the type of statement that is foolish and should never

be made by anyone in the political realm in our country in a time of

great crisis and great confrontation over the issue of freedom and

democracy.

America has long been the leader of the free world. But we did not

get there in an easy way. Likewise, Iraq is not going to get there in

an easy way. No one ever said it would be easy making a democracy out

of a country the size of California, that has no democratic traditions,

is divided sometimes by religious and ethnic disputes, and has a

history of internal repression.

When I think about our great country and the fact that a little over

225 years ago we declared our independence, what happened in our

country when the citizens of America became free, it was not easy. We

had great loss of life in order to ensure that America became free and

independent. When we look at what has happened in America over the

course of that 225-plus years, we have suffered great loss of life of

brave men and women who fought for a cause, a cause of freedom and a

cause

of democracy, the simple cause of freedom that is being fought for in

Iraq today.

America is providing the kind of leadership the world respects and

the world has come to understand; that it is what America stands for.

When Americans provide that kind of leadership, it is incumbent on all

Americans to rally around the leadership of this country in times of

great crisis in the world, when we are the leader of the free world,

and not to try to incite the other side, not try to create a more

difficult position for our brave men and women in the military, who

today continue to be in harm's way and continue to suffer loss of life.

Speaking of that, I concur with my friend from Minnesota, our hearts

go out to the families of those brave men and women--all 600-plus--who

have suffered loss of life in Iraq as a result of their fight for the

cause of freedom. In addition to that, we have a number of men and

women who have been injured; and, again, it is for the right reason.

I had a great privilege about 2 weeks ago of visiting a number of

military bases in my State. One of the bases I visited was Fort Gordon,

GA. At Fort Gordon, right outside of Augusta, we had a tour of the

base, the usual things that we do to see what is going on with respect

to the missions at Fort Gordon. At the end of the day, I had the

opportunity to participate in a very unique ceremony. It was a

reenlistment ceremony, where 17 men and women were reenlisting in the

U.S. Army.

Some of these men and women had been longtime members of the Armed

Forces; some had only been in for a couple of years, but they were re-

upping. Some of them had been to Iraq. Some of them had seen their

fellow soldiers fallen to the ground injured or killed. Yet here they

were raising their right hand and reenlisting in the U.S. Army.

I had the opportunity to visit with every single one of them, and for

the most part, I asked the same question to each of them; and that is,

Why are you doing this? Why are you reenlisting in the Army in these

difficult times? I felt so great, No. 1, just to be in the presence of

those true American heroes; but secondly, the response I got, in

unison, from those individuals was that: I like my job. I enjoy what I

am doing, and it is my opportunity to do something positive for

America.

The ones who had been in Iraq had a very high morale about what is

going on over there because they are the ones who were on the ground

every day in Iraq. They know the feeling of the majority--the

overwhelming majority--of the Iraqi people. They support the freedom

and democracy that America is making the sacrifices for.

Some say this administration underestimated just how difficult and

complex the job in Iraq would be. I will be honest, I have come to

share that view. I think the administration would agree with that. But

I believe, therefore, we need to learn from our tactical mistakes, and

to ensure that our posture in Iraq is flexible and can adapt to fluid

and developing circumstances. If this means finding new ways to ensure

Shiite grievances are heard, so be it, as the cooperation of the Shiite

majority in the transition ahead is essential to that transition

success. But the CPA must also respond aggressively to aggression of

any kind that is directed against our troops.

In talking about what we anticipated or what the administration

expected in Iraq, let's talk also about some of the things we did not

expect. We did not expect for clerics in that part of the world to come

forward, and instead of preaching religion that you would expect them

to be preaching, to be preaching and advocating hatred and violence

towards Americans--Americans, who had given them the opportunity to

stand in that mosque and express the words they were expressing,

because without the Americans taking down Saddam Hussein, they would

not have that freedom, they would not have the ability to carry out

their disruptions and the violence that is ongoing over there today.

But removed from that, and behind the cloud of those robes of

religion, clerics are hiding, and they are also hiding behind innocent

women and children and shielding themselves by use of innocent people

from the Americans who seek to arrest and prosecute them for the crimes

they have carried out. Those are the types of things that no

administration could anticipate and no administration should have

expected when we freed the people of Iraq from the regime of Saddam

Hussein.

There is one other aspect of the situation in Iraq that is just as

personally, if not more personally, troubling to me; and that is the

issue relative to our lack of intelligence gathering, the lack of the

ability to use human assets on the ground inside of Iraq, to make sure

we find out what is going on among these radical clerics who are

advocating violence; what is going on with respect to the terrorist

community and the terrorists themselves relative to attacks against

Americans; what is going on with respect to the long-term plans of

these terrorists as it applies to the American service people, as well

as civilians who are on the ground in Iraq.

We are not doing the job of gathering intelligence that we need to be

doing. As a member of the Intelligence Committee, I assure you, we are

doing our oversight. We are going to be critical where we need to be

critical because this is a phase of this war that must improve. We are

going to do our job and make it improve so the people of Iraq will

ultimately be free, the world will be safer, and America will be a

safer country.

I yield back, Mr. President.