Mr. President, I would like to speak for a moment about the

historic day tomorrow, which is the 1-year anniversary of the

liberation of Iraq, and the experience which Senator McCain and Senator

Chambliss and Senator Cochran and I just had with a few others in

meeting the Ambassador-designate from Iraq, Ambassador-designate Rend

Al-Rahim.

She has been a leader in the movement for women's rights in Iraq, and

has been designated by the Iraqi Governing Council to represent her

country here in the United States at this historic time. In listening

to her message, it simply should remind all of us of the importance of

what we, as Americans, have been doing in support of freedom for the

Iraqi people.

I wish to share a few of the comments which she made to us, and a bit

of the response to that. First, she is a remarkable woman in her own

right; she, as I said, has been fighting for Iraqi rights for a long

time. It is no surprise that someone with her background and

qualifications has been selected to represent her country in the United

States.

Her first remarks were to thank the United States for helping to free

the Iraqi people and making an opportunity available to them to govern

themselves. She said that the main

word in Iraq today is the word ``democracy,'' that is what the Iraqi

people are talking about, and they are going to be ready and, indeed,

demand that when June 30 comes, they will be able to take control of

the political affairs of their country.

This is something they have been waiting for a long time to

accomplish, and they are very grateful to the United States for making

this opportunity available to them. She made the point that democracy

died in Iraq 35 years ago; that under the repressive regime of Saddam

Hussein there was no freedom of expression, no ability to debate,

political parties ceased to exist; he would not permit anyone to

question him. But today she talked about the 150 new newspapers that

have cropped up, debating all sorts of issues in the country, and the

opportunity for people to present their views on free television.

She said throughout the country of Iraq today there is free and

robust debate about the political future of their country; that

political parties have grown, and the ability of Iraqis to govern

themselves, in her view, is not in doubt.

She made the point the security problems the United States and

coalition and Iraqi forces are facing today, while grave and serious,

are not representative of any kind of popular uprising in the country

as a whole; that in her view they represent a very thin slice of the

Iraqi population, and Americans should not view this as the view of the

Iraqi people in general. Indeed, the opposite would be the case; that

most Iraqis support the presence of the United States, appreciate what

we are trying to accomplish with the help of the Iraqi people there,

and that this relatively small group of disaffected people does not

represent the view of the Iraqi people as a whole.

In fact, her quotation, almost exactly--and she repeated it three

times--was that the vast, vast, vast majority of the Iraqi people

reject this point of view and support the presence of the United States

and assistance to the people.

It was a remarkable performance by the Ambassador-designate who told

us about the condition in which they found the Embassy when they came

in and simply reminded us that we have a lot to do in supporting this

new government and helping it to be a viable force, not just in the

country of Iraq itself but in representing itself to the rest of the

world, and most especially in the United States.

I was also moved by the strong statement made by my colleague from

Arizona, Senator McCain, who had talked about his experience in Iraq

and his experiences elsewhere in admonishing all of us to remember that

there is no alternative to victory in this war on terror, and

especially in the front we are conducting in Iraq today. Defeat is not

an option. The consequences of defeat for the United States and the

West and our position in the war on terror would be catastrophic. Our

credibility would be lost, and that credibility is our primary asset in

dealing with terrorism around the world.

Our ability to affect the future with respect to the terrorist threat

would be diminished significantly if we were not to persevere and

complete our job in Iraq. This means, as Senator McCain pointed out, we

will have to acknowledge the hard reality that it will not be easy, and

it will not be cheap. There will be casualties, and it is going to take

a long time.

Remember President Bush first told us that when this war commenced,

and in his State of the Union speech, pointing out that it would be a

long, difficult struggle and that the American people would have to be

prepared to persevere. The American people have persevered.

We are at a crossroads now. There are some among us who are raising

questions. That, in and of itself, in a democracy is not only fine but

critically important. The question is the tone of the criticism and the

effect that it can have both on the morale of the Iraqi people and our

own troops fighting there, as well as the message it conveys to the

enemy terrorists. If the criticism is constructive and goes to

questions of how we should be doing what we are doing, it could be very

beneficial.

If, on the other hand, it suggests political motives for the

President and the administration, suggests there is no support for the

position we are taking, and suggests what little support there might be

will erode to the point that we will not be able to sustain our

position, then people begin to wonder. The people of Iraq who are still

not secure, who are still fearful there are those among them who would

cause them harm if they only had a chance, including the old Baathists,

are going to be less secure and bold going forth with their new

government and less willing to continue to support the United States.

Our allies, the same message. Our troops would wonder, Is this a

fight worth fighting; their families wondering, Is it worth my son or

daughter dying? Of course, the message to the terrorists, If we wait

these people out, these Americans have shown that they are willing to

only fight for so long, and then they will cut and run if we make life

difficult enough for them.

This is a message we cannot afford to send. It is important the tone

of the debate, the content of debate, the motives ascribed to leaders

in this country all take into account the way the message is portrayed

elsewhere, the way it will be played on Arab television, for example.

These are not small matters. These are matters of fine-tuning a debate

in the United States so that it will not adversely affect the way we

can conduct the war on terror generally, and on operations in Iraq

specifically.

I think sometimes we fail to take into account how our words are

listened to all over the world. I know as a Senator, it is still hard

for me to appreciate, knowing who I am and where I came from, that when

I speak, my words may have pretty significant consequences to an awful

lot of people. It is hard for me to remember that. I don't look at

myself any differently than I did when I was a lawyer 20 years ago. But

we in the United States tend to forget that others view us very

closely, and everything we do they pay a lot of attention. So the words

we speak in this Chamber and in other forums are going to be parsed

very carefully by others around the world for meaning.

When those words suggest either there is a lack of support in this

country for the policies being pursued, that were overwhelmingly

supported by the Members of this body, the House of Representatives

and, of course, the administration, when there is a suggestion that

there is a lack of support for that policy or that support is eroding,

and if terrorists continue to ply their trade they can undercut us to

the point we will cut and run, when the words are interpreted in that

way, then they undercut not just our policy but the people who are

fighting for us in that region, and the people on whose behalf we are

trying to help secure freedom.

That is why it is so important for us to conduct this debate in a

civil and measured and responsible way. I urge all of my colleagues to

try to approach the subject in that fashion. I criticize no one for

raising questions or even for criticizing the President or the

administration. It is perfectly appropriate in our country to do that.

There is certainly no right or wrong in exactly how we are approaching

each of these issues. The decisions are made in the fog of war. Many of

them are somewhat gray.

I would only ask my colleagues, as we conduct this debate, that we

consider the tone so it doesn't have an adverse effect on the actual

war on terrorism itself.

As my colleague, Senator McCain, said, defeat is not an option. It is

impossible, given our military power, for us to lose the war in Iraq,

but it would be possible to lose that war at home if we don't conduct

ourselves in the same fashion and same spirit we ask our troops to

conduct themselves when they are fighting for us abroad. That is an

important responsibility we take on.

When I listened to the words of the Ambassador-designate today about

looking at the future of her country with such optimism and such

courage and such hope, it rekindled in me the desire to come and talk

about the fact that we have to do our part. Our troops are doing their

part. We have to do our part as well. We need to make wise decisions.

We need to support the troops. We need to support the administration

to the absolute extent we can. Our partisanship should stop at the

shores, as it historically has.

I know in an election year it is going to be difficult for us to

discipline ourselves in that way, but we have to do so because of the

stakes involved.

I find after 1 year of the liberation of the Iraqi people, great

cause for hope.

We should not minimize the difficulties that lie ahead. I think we

need to be extraordinarily candid about the problems we will continue

to confront. But at the end of the day, if we persevere as we know we

can, if we have the same resolve and strength of character our young

men and women do who are there fighting right now--and you only have to

talk to a few to be imbued with their spirit--then I have no doubt the

United States will stay strong, our great ally Great Britain will do

the same, as well as other members of the coalition that have assisted

us so strongly; and in persevering and staying the course, we will be

able, No. 1, to turn over political control of Iraq on June 30 to the

Iraqi Governing Council and, No. 2, we will be able to stay for as long

as it takes to help secure that country.

Just as we have had the opportunity to govern ourselves, the Iraqi

people will have the same opportunity. That will, in turn, show others

in the region how they too can govern themselves democratically, they

can live in an environment of freedom, and that is infectious and

probably would do more than any other single thing to ensure that

region of the world can enjoy peace, and that peace can even come to

the troubled relationship between the Palestinians and Israelis. It is

something to be hoped for. It all depends on our ability right now to

persevere, stay the course, and to maintain the hope and optimism we

had when we began this operation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.