Mr. President, thank you for your indulgence this

evening. I, for the last couple of nights, have been reading through

much of Bob Woodward's new book, ``Plan Of Attack.'' It provides,

believe me, quite an exceptional insight into the timetable and the

process by which President Bush, Vice President Cheney, and their top

advisers secretly planned and then engineered our country and the world

into the Iraq war.

It is remarkable that virtually every top administration official

from the President on down provided so much information to Mr.

Woodward, information that they withheld from Congress and from the

American people.

For example, in the fall of 2002, I sat through several hours of top

secret briefings with the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency

and he never told us it was a ``slam-dunk'' that Saddam Hussein had

weapons of mass destruction, as he reportedly said to the President. I

guess I am glad he didn't, because he was wrong.

I voted against the Iraq resolution that fall because I was not

persuaded that Saddam Hussein had or was close to acquiring weapons

that threatened the national security of the United States. So I guess

I am fortunate that I wasn't slam-dunked.

I wasn't, either, at the September 26, 2002, meeting which President

Bush reportedly, according to Mr. Woodward, had with 18 Members of the

House of Representatives. In the book, the President is quoted as

saying--Mr. Woodward says initially:

That was a significantly shorter timetable than anything that was

represented to me in any of the briefings that I attended, even under

those circumstances of procuring from the outside, weapons materials.

Then the President went to the Rose Garden and said to the assembled

press corps, and therefore to the Nation and the world:

That is an alarming statement, coming from a President of the United

States, a statement likely to frighten a great many Americans and also

pressure a great many Members of Congress that Iraq was, right then and

there, an urgent and immediate threat to our national security.

Mr. Woodward goes on to say that the CIA Director and others had

warned the British not to make that allegation, which was based on a

questionable source and almost certainly referred to battlefield

weapons, not ones that Iraq could launch even at neighboring countries,

let alone American cities. He quotes the Director of the CIA as

referring privately to this as:

I know one of my Senate colleagues who has said that he based his

vote in support of the war resolution on that stated threat, and the

peril, if true, in which it would have placed coastal cities in his

State--if true. Of course it was true if the President, the President

of the United States, said so to the American people from the White

House, with Members of the House of Representatives, Democrats and

Republicans, standing right behind him.

They presumably also believed in the President, that he was speaking

the truth--a truth that perhaps only he could know. And surely,

certainly, if he happened to misspeak, someone in the administration

who knew otherwise, especially the person in charge of our national

intelligence agency, would make sure the necessary correction would be

issued quickly so as not to mislead anyone or everyone. But that wasn't

done.

That is just one example of the misuse of prewar intelligence by the

Bush administration. But in that instance the President himself and the

commission the President appointed to look into the intelligence

failures, if there were, or successes leading up to and through the

Iraqi war, that commission will not be looking into that use or misuse

of intelligence information by the administration officials because the

President's directive does not permit them to do so.

If anybody in this body needs sufficient cause to insist upon, as

members of my caucus have for many months now, a truly independent

commission, one with full authority to investigate whatever its members

determine warrants their investigation so that we all can know the

truth and the full truth about who had what information and who used

what information truthfully or untruthfully and, therefore, led us into

that war, if they need sufficient cause, this book certainly provides

it.

It is clear to me, however--I say this very reluctantly--that the

administration won't provide us with the truth themselves--perhaps only

part of it through Mr. Woodward. I regret to say I am convinced that my

colleagues on the other side of the aisle won't require the

administration to do so. Instead, it is hunkered down, admitting no

mistakes, acknowledging no difficulty, keeps spinning the party line

about how well everything is going in Iraq, how much better and safer

the Iraqi people are, we are, and the world is as a result of this war.

That is what we have been told repeatedly and emphatically in every

Senate Armed Services Committee meeting I have attended and in every

secret and top secret briefing I received. And in the now dwindling

number of real opportunities to question the administration's decisions

about what is going on in Iraq, we get instead the party line about

what they want us to know--what they won't tell us because they don't

want us to know. What they tell us is usually contradicted as a result

of some good investigative journalism. And I thank the Lord for a free

and vigilant press in this country. It is just an absolute requirement

for successful democracy.

Increasingly now what we are finding out is the hard realities--the

ugly truths about what really is happening or not happening in Iraq--

grab the headlines and seize our attention and sear our consciences as

more and more Americans are dying there, as more and more are wounded,

injured, and maimed for life.

I have been to the hospitals here. I think most of my colleagues have

as well. I have seen lives that have changed forever. And, of course, I

have gone to services for those whose lives were ended forever, and

those families have to struggle and go on.

It is incredible to watch what is going on in Iraq now and see that

more and more of our incredibly courageous men and women serving over

there are being murdered by the people they saved--the people that the

administration with certainty said would support our troops as

liberators and not attack them as enemies.

What do our incredibly brave American troops over in Iraq need to be

able to do the enormous task that was assigned to them? We keep asking

that question in Congress. We certainly asked it in the Armed Services

Committee. We wanted to provide it.

This Congress and the Congress previous to this one--in which I also

served--provided the administration with every single dollar it

requested for the operation in Iraq, whether it was a regular

appropriation, a supplemental appropriation, or emergency

supplemental appropriation. I personally voted for every dollar the

President said is needed for military supplies and equipment for the

Iraqi security force training, for economic development in that

country, and for social rehabilitation.

My colleague, Senator Coleman, and I added funding that had been

overlooked to help pay for those American heroes who are serving over

there to travel home to see their families during their 2-week leave in

the middle of what has become a 12-month or 18-month or indefinitely

extended tours of duty.

Senator Bob Graham saw to it that the wounded soldiers wouldn't have

to pay for their own hospital meals during their recuperations. Senator

Lindsey Graham and Senator Tom Daschle tried to extend the health care

coverage that is provided to reservists and National Guard men and

women and their families to make it year round, since their service in

certainly incredibly increasing numbers of cases have become year

round, and subject to that at a moment's notice. I was a proud

cosponsor of that legislation. It was opposed by the administration.

Despite that opposition, last year we were partially successful, and we

are going to be trying to accomplish the rest this year.

Most of my caucus and quite a number of my Republican colleagues have

also voted several times to restore the funding cuts that the

administration proposed for the VA health system which is even now

seriously overloaded.

When with no forewarning and apparently with very little

foreknowledge, heavy fighting escalated from where it was before in

Iraq and erupted where it was not before; when American forces are

suffering their highest casualties in the years since President Bush

flew onto the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln and proclaimed ``mission

accomplished;'' when 20,000 of our troops, our constituents, the

families in our States were told they were literally packing up and

heading for home, and then told they must stay for an indefinitely

extended period; then we in the Senate Armed Services Committee meeting

this week are told by the Deputy Secretary of Defense that ``the

increase in violence was not entirely unexpected;'' it is hard to

reconcile what has occurred.

Just 3 weeks earlier--just hours, in fact, before the four American

contractors were ambushed and massacred and then part of hell broke

loose over there--those expectations were not mentioned in a briefing

we attended. They weren't even suggested. When I made that point--I

didn't ask in that briefing about Fallujah--well, what about it now?

``Unsettled,'' I was told this week but U.S. forces will soon secure

the city.

The next morning they published a report that a:

The Alamo? That was pretty unsettling, as I recall from my history

books, and it kept getting worse thereafter.

Again at a hearing, I queried that there have been reports that Iraqi

forces which we have been paying $1 billion through supplemental

appropriations to supposedly train and equip so they can fight and

protect their own country and our men and women can come home, there

were reports some of them in the last couple of weeks--many of them--

would not fight, that they ran away and even left our guns and

equipment to be used by the insurgents to try to kill our own forces.

How many did so? In other words, how effective has our training been?

Didn't know. Estimated maybe 5 to 10 percent.

That very night I read in an article I overlooked in a morning paper,

that same day an American general who was in Iraq put the percentage of

Iraqi forces who failed to fight at 40 percent; 40 percent of our

supposed allies were not allies when needed and 40 percent of our

equipment is being used against our own troops.

The question I most want to be answered is, What is your current

timetable for bringing our troops home? They are showing a big chart at

the hearing for the timetable of the transfer of political

responsibilities and government authority. It is quite detailed. It

went through 2004, 2005, and into 2006. What, then, I asked, is the

timetable for the transition of military responsibility to the Iraqis?

No answer, not even in the closed session following. What is the United

States force level now projected in 6 months, in 12 months in Iraq? No

answer.

Surely these projections are being made. Nobody likes to predict in

public what the uncertain future might hold, but we have a right to

know. More importantly, the American people have a right to know. These

are their sons and daughters over there on the orders of their

Commander in Chief and they deserve to be told the truth. We are not

even being told how much money the war in Iraq and the war in

Afghanistan is expected to cost in the next fiscal year, which starts

in 5 months.

We cannot even find out when the $87 billion we appropriated last

October will run out. That is ridiculous. After all, whose money is it?

Whose Government is it? It is our Government, all of us here and all of

the American people, we are all in this together for better or for

worse. We will pay for it or avoid paying for it together. We will

benefit from an improved world or suffer from the reported

unprecedented Arab hatred toward America. We will do that together. Our

lives and our children's lives, our beloved Nation's future, will all

be affected for many years profoundly by what is being done in our

names and by the results and consequences that have occurred.

Please, tell the truth, Mr. President, the real truth, the whole

truth, and we will face it together.

I yield the floor.