Mr. President, as President pro tempore and presiding

over the Senate, I have found the overheated rhetoric on Iraq over the

last few days at best disappointing and at worst misleading, harshly

partisan, and motivated by election year politics. I have simply had

enough of this. I have come to the floor to ask my Senate colleagues to

restore the level of debate that this institution demands. I urge the

Senate to not play politics with Iraq.

Do not seek to gain some slim, fleeting advantage at the ballot box

by making our country appear divided, and by making reckless

accusations.

Our troops in Iraq deserve better than this. They deserve much

better. If there is debate, let it be reasoned and measured, and

focused on the way forward in this war on terrorism.

When our forces are deployed and in the field, they deserve nothing

less than our absolute, unwavering commitment to their success. Nothing

less.

I take strong issue with three particular themes: First, the analogy

that Iraq is somehow like Vietnam. This analogy is wrong, and simply

inflammatory; second, that the President was wrong when he made his

speech on the USS Abraham Lincoln a year ago on May 1; and third, that

somehow our action to remove the brutal regime of Saddam Hussein was in

any regard ``unprovoked.'' That is simply and plainly not true.

Iraq is not Vietnam. It is wildly irresponsible--even reckless--to

compare the situation in Iraq to the war in Vietnam. Those who make

that false claim are engaging in dangerous rhetoric, and are ill

informed about history and facts of the two conflicts.

Comparing Iraq to Vietnam does not advance the debate, it simply

inflames the issue, obscures the facts and, unfortunately, misleads the

American people.

My colleague, the senior Senator from Massachusetts, started this

Iraq is Vietnam spin in a speech a few weeks ago. Of all people, he

knows better than to make that bogus comparison.

I encourage my colleagues to turn down the rhetoric on Vietnam, and

get the facts right. Here are some of those facts:

In Vietnam, President Kennedy sent ``advisers'' to Vietnam in 1961,

but they were not authorized to use force until 1964, 3 years later.

Then, in 1971, Congress repealed that authority.

In Iraq, this very Congress approved a resolution that authorized the

use of force in October, 2002, well in advance of any forces being

deployed. That resolution still stands today.

In Vietnam, eight nations joined with the United States.

In Iraq, over 30 nations are in our coalition, including 16 of 26

NATO allies.

In Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh violated zero U.N. Security Council

resolutions--none.

In Iraq, Saddam Hussein violated seventeen--seventeen--U.N. Security

Council resolutions, beginning immediately after the 1991 Gulf war

cease fire agreement.

In Vietnam, how many draftees were sent to that country? About two

million draftees, all young men.

In Iraq, how many draftees are there? Zero, none. We have an all-

volunteer force. They know the risks, they know their duty, and they

volunteer to step forward and serve our country.

I have yet to meet one at the hospitals here who hasn't asked me the

question: How can I go back to my unit? How can I go back to Iraq? They

ask that despite the many serious wounds they have.

In Vietnam, against how many Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians did

Ho Chi Minh use chemical and biological weapons? Were there chemical

and biological weapons used by North Vietnam? No, none.

In Iraq, against how many Iraqis, Iranians, and Kurds did Saddam

Hussein use chemical and biological weapons? Thousands and thousands of

people--the Kurds, the Iraqis, and Iranians--were the subject of

chemical and biological weapons used by Saddam Hussein.

I have an article here from last Sunday's Providence Journal-

Bulletin, and the headline of that article is this: ``Historians,

Soldiers Hesitant to Call Iraq another Vietnam: the purposes, strategy,

terrain and players in the Vietnam war were far different than those in

Iraq, many experts say.''

Far different than those in Iraq, indeed.

That is a true statement by the Providence Journal-Bulletin. In this

article, Anthony Cordesman, a military expert and former diplomat, says

``I really worry about the analogy between Vietnam and Iraq, where

we're not really fighting a foreign enemy.''

Mr. Cordesman, who is now at the Center for Strategic and

International Studies, goes on to say:

I hope that cooler heads and cooler rhetoric will prevail here in the

Senate. My colleague from Delaware, the ranking member of the Senate

Foreign Relations committee, has found the Vietnam analogy,

``misleading'' because, as he says, ``The vast majority of Iraqis share

our vision for a participatory, representative democracy.''

President Bush is absolutely right when he says that the Vietnam-Iraq

analogy is false. And he is right that brandishing that false analogy

as a rhetorical weapon, ``sends the wrong message to our troops and

sends the wrong message to the enemy.''

With regard to President Bush's speech on the USS Abraham Lincoln,

some have chosen to make a great issue about it. They have endlessly

taunted the Commander in Chief for words on a banner, and have twisted

his words to suit their purposes.

What the President said is this:

The President was dead-on right. He spoke clearly and plainly, yet

some refuse to listen to what he said.

He went on to say that ``major combat operations in Iraq have

ended.'' The President was and is absolutely correct today in making

that statement.

Saddam's regime of oppression and torture was gone. The Hussein Baath

Party regime was disbanded, and no longer in power. Baghdad had fallen,

and was under the control of the coalition of which we were the leader.

Active, organized military resistance had collapsed. Saddam's

military forces were not resisting; their will to fight had been

destroyed; they had no ability to command and control the few forces

they had left.

The mission was to remove a threatening, brutal dictator from power,

to bring to an end the ruthless oppression of the Iraqi people--and

that mission was accomplished.

President Bush made it abundantly clear that he recognized the

challenges that would face America and confront our troops. He said,

``And now our coalition is engaged in securing and reconstructing that

country.''

He said:

That could not be clearer or more truthful. There are those in this

body who should listen to these words and hear them accurately.

Let me state that again. He said:

The clear and compelling meaning of the President's words on May 1,

2003 was that Saddam Hussein had been removed from power, Iraq's

military defeated, and the work of stabilizing and reconstructing Iraq

had begun--and that such work would be both difficult and costly.

The President was right when he spoke on the carrier a year ago, and

he is still right today.

What has happened in recent weeks and months is an emerging

insurgency, and the appearance of foreign fighters in Iraq who will do

anything--anything--to see the coalition fail, and see Iraq revert back

to a brutal dictatorship, and become a breeding ground for radical

Islamic terrorists.

These terrorists have joined with former regime elements, and have

chosen to make Iraq a full-blown battlefield in the war on terrorism.

This is not a war against Saddam Hussein. This is a war on terrorism.

What these terrorists and their sympathizers fear most is Iraq becoming

a stable, functioning democracy that benefits the Iraqi people, joins

the world community, and serves as a source of democratic influence on

the people of the region.

They have no regard for the will of the Iraqi people, for their

safety, for their security or for their future. They are simply using

Iraqi soil, and taking innocent Iraqi lives, in their ruthless Jihad,

in their desire to spread chaos and foment hate across the Islamic

world, and in their hatred of freedom, moderation and democracy.

I urge those who are twisting the President's words of now almost a

year ago to listen carefully to what he said, to end the personal

attack, to stop the spin. Stop parsing words and stop mocking plastic

banners. We can and we must do better than that in the Senate.

And unprovoked? I heard the word ``unprovoked.'' My third point is, I

say to those who claim the war to liberate Iraq was somehow

``unprovoked,'' that is wrong. It is absolutely wrong. Could that

statement be more preposterous? Could anything be more disconnected

from the truth in Iraq? Can anyone say with a straight face Saddam

Hussein did nothing to provoke the international community?

Here is a sampling of some of the ways that Saddam Hussein provoked

this conflict, how he provoked the United States, and how he provoked

the world. In 1980, Iraq invaded Iran and used chemical weapons against

the Iranian people. In 1988, Saddam's forces killed 5,000 innocent

civilians in a chemical weapons attack against the Kurdish villages of

Halabja. In 1990, Saddam's forces invaded another neighbor, this time

Kuwait. We all know in the Gulf War thousands of innocent Kuwaiti

civilians were raped, tortured, and murdered during the occupation. In

1991, Iraq was poised to march on other nations but was stopped by a

U.S.-led coalition of forces. We call that the Gulf War. Iraq has

launched ballistic missiles at four of its neighbors. Remember that,

``unprovoked''? It launched ballistic missiles at four of its

neighbors: Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Israel. I might say, I was

in Israel when one of those was launched.

Saddam's Iraq was, at a minimum, engaged in clandestine research and

development activities to develop, refine, and employ chemical and

biological weapons. From 1991 to 2003, Saddam's Iraq fired more than

1,000 missiles at our aircraft as they patroled Iraq's U.N.-sanctioned

no-fly zones. We went over to Kuwait. We met the pilots who were flying

day after day--what we call the CAP, the constant air patrol--at the

request of the U.N. in compliance with the U.N. resolution. They told

us how they were fired at again and again and again. Saddam Hussein was

firing at U.S. planes daily. Provocation? I can't think of another

provocation. As a matter of fact, we should have gone to war when

President Clinton said he was about ready to go to war in 1998.

For more than a decade, Saddam's Iraq steadfastly ignored the will of

the United Nations and the civilized world and ignored no fewer than 17

U.N. resolutions.

I could continue with the list, but the point is the same: To say

that Saddam Hussein is not responsible for his fate and Iraq's current

status and did nothing to provoke that change is ludicrous. It is

plainly untrue.

Let me conclude by saying this: The tone of the debate on Iraq must

change. With our troops under daily attack, we cannot make Iraq a

political football in an election year or any year.

Representative Jim Marshall, a freshman Democrat from Georgia, wrote

a compelling column in the Washington Post last October. The title of

his column was ``Don't Play Politics on Iraq.'' A decorated Army Ranger

who served in Vietnam, Congressman Marshall was right then and he is

right today. His observations were wise then and even wiser today:

Don't play politics on Iraq.

Let me quote from that article Congressman Marshall wrote:

I continue with the article written by Congressman Marshall:

That Congressman gets it. He really gets it. You do not play politics

on Iraq. You do not play politics with national security. You do not

play politics with the defense of this country. You do not play

politics with troops deployed. You do not let seeking partisan

advantage drive a wedge between Americans when troops are in harm's

way.

I urge our colleagues to end this divisive practice of using the

floor of this Senate and this issue on Iraq to bash the administration

to try to score political points. We can do better than that. For those

who persist on this practice, reflect on Congressman Marshall's words:

It endangers our troops and our effort. It is simply wrong, election

year or not. Those who irresponsibly endanger or use Iraq for partisan

advantage should be warmed: You must understand and take responsibility

for

the message you send to the enemies of freedom, democracy, and liberty

through the world.

This country should be united when we have troops abroad. We should

be united when we have people trying to assist Iraqis to find freedom

and defeat the terrorists who persist to bring the war on terrorism to

Iraq after we won the war against Saddam Hussein. I urge my colleagues

to follow Congressman Marshall's injunction: Do not play politics

anymore on Iraq.

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