Mr. President, for many months the President's critics

have asserted the situation in Iraq would improve if only the

administration would cede control over the reconstruction and

democratization of Iraq to the United Nations.

While the presumptive Democratic nominee, Senator Kerry, has yet to

offer a detailed plan for Iraq, he has made it abundantly clear it

involves transferring a significant measure of authority to the U.N. In

fact, on December 3rd of last year, he noted:

The U.N. is an immensely valuable organization, and America's

significant contributions to the U.N. are a worthwhile investment. The

U.N. is often the only entity that can bring international humanitarian

relief to needy and impoverished societies across the globe, and its

employees and volunteers deserve the highest praise for their selfless

acts to bring comfort to the downtrodden.

When civil authorities in dysfunctional states collapse, the U.N. has

sometimes averted humanitarian disaster. It can bring relief to failed

states in isolated backwaters of the world where the major powers are

unlikely to intervene themselves.

The U.N. in such cases plays a critical role and deserves our support

for its important efforts. But the United Nations is not a blue-

helmeted knight here to slay the dragons of aggression and evil. When

the stakes are high and the threat of violence is real, the United

States is too often helpless in the face of danger.

Before I turn my attention to the specific reason that Americans

should be wary of abandoning Iraq to the United Nations, let me dispel

a myth about the administration's foreign policy.

The President's critics often refer to America's efforts in Iraq as

unilateralist. This politically expedient fix is an insult to the

thousands of men and women from the 30-plus countries who are risking

their lives to bring peace and democracy to the people of Iraq. If the

President's critics still believe his policy to be a go-it-alone

approach, let them repeat that assertion to the families of the

Italian, Spanish, Polish, British, Danish, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Thai,

Estonian, South Korean, Japanese, and Salvadoran soldiers and aid

workers who have given their lives in Iraq.

Some say United Nations oversight in Iraq would confer legitimacy to

the coalition's occupation and reconstruction of that country. I find

that hard to believe. Given its role in sustaining the Saddam Hussein

regime via the alleged mismanagement of the Oil for Food Program and

the refusal to enforce its own resolutions, the United Nations is not

in a position to lend legitimacy to a free Iraq. In fact, I think it

could be

argued it would take away legitimacy from a free Iraq. The only thing

that can confer legitimacy in Iraq is a series of national elections.

However, these elections must not occur too soon as democracy cannot be

turned on at the flip of a switch. But they will come in due time. If

we stay the course, by December of next year the Iraqis will likely

elect the most representative government in the Arab world.

I might say to put that in context it was 12 years between the

Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution being

adopted.

So the Iraqis will have gone from liberation to election in under

1,000 days and even though we have 24-hour television these days, that

is still a remarkably fast evolution from dictatorship, brutal

dictatorship to representative government.

The Oil for Food scandal highlights another reason we should not rush

to put the United Nations in charge of Iraq's reconstruction. Although

we do not yet know the full story, we can draw some initial lessons.

First, an organization that apparently so mismanaged the Oil for Food

Program cannot be trusted to manage a $34 billion budget for Iraqi

reconstruction.

Second, the alleged corruption of some United Nations officials and

member states raises a serious concern about the U.N.'s commitment to

its stated mission. Instead of sanctioning Saddam Hussein's regime, a

number of United Nations officials and foreign diplomats may have used

the Oil for Food Program as a slush fund to enrich themselves while

allowing profits and goods to be diverted away from needy Iraqis and

toward the Saddam Hussein regime.

Free Iraqis have ample reason to be wary of entrusting their future

to those who allegedly had no qualms about doing illicit business with

their oppressor.

United Nations control will not stop the violence in Iraq. Quite

frankly, the United Nations is not capable of managing the security

situation in Iraq. Terrorists do not respect blue-helmeted peacekeepers

because the U.N. has proven itself to lack either the firepower or the

will to quell violent uprisings. In Somalia, when Aidid's thugs took to

the streets, United Nations peacekeepers stayed in camp while American

troops fought to restore order.

How can we expect United Nations forces that fled from Somalia's

untrained gangs to confront the professional fedayeen and suicidal

radicals behind this insurgency in Iraq? Few seriously believe the U.N.

can be trusted to provide security for the Iraqi people. Indeed, the

United Nations has demonstrated its inability to provide security even

for itself. The U.N.'s own scathing report on the bombing of its

headquarters in Baghdad last summer documented the culture of

complacency and poor planning within the U.N.'s security forces. The

United Nations has already cut and run in Iraq in the wake of the

August bombings of its headquarters. How can the Iraqis trust the U.N.

not to abandon them yet again to the lawless insurgents who seek to

derail the democratic process?

There is a further problem subjugating American foreign policy

authority to the United Nations Security Council. The veto-wielding

permanent members of the security council were chosen because they were

simply the world's major powers at the time the United Nations was

established. It therefore does not accurately reflect the distribution

of world power today, and its composition discriminates against the

current major powers that share principles of democracy and of freedom.

For example, Communist China is a permanent member, but democratic

Japan, the world's second largest economy, is not. Newly democratic

Russia is a member, but neither Canada nor Spain, democracies with

twice the size of Russia's economy, is a member; nor is Italy, with an

economy four times as large as that of Russia; nor is India, the

world's largest democracy.

Even France, although democratic, often has different strategic and

political interests than the United States. As evidenced by the Oil for

Food scandal, it is possible that France, sometimes a more zealous

competitor than an ally, had a significant financial stake in the

continuation of the Saddam Hussein regime.

When the security council deliberates, there are often too many cooks

in the kitchen and all of them have different tastes.

If the United Nations takes a larger role in Iraq, so too will the

general assembly. I am not convinced that will be a good thing. There

are, to be sure, responsible nations in the general assembly but,

frankly, they are few and very far between.

The irony that so many authoritarian regimes are represented in such

a democratic body is often lost on American politicians who so

desperately seek approval of our foreign policy from this very body.

The general assembly, in fact, provides funds for despotic member

states to pour sand onto the clogs of international peace and

stability. These regimes are unremittingly hostile to the United States

and to democracy, and they will continue to exploit their authority at

the U.N. to halt freedom's progress.

Sudan, Syria, and Iran did not oppose the liberation of Iraq because

they wanted to peacefully resolve the growing international crisis.

They opposed the war because they didn't want to see a precedent

whereby their own tyrannies could be undermined.

The ability of rogue states to thwart the U.N.'s efforts to do the

right thing is exemplified by the United Nations Human Rights

Commission whose members include--listen to this, the United Nations

Human Rights Commission whose members include Cuba, China, Pakistan,

Saudi Arabia, and Sudan, among others.

Joanna Weschler of Human Rights Watch has called the commission a

rogue's gallery of human rights abusers--that is the Commission on

Human Rights at the United Nations--and correctly noted ``an abusive

country cannot honestly pass judgment on other abusive countries.''

So does Senator Kerry really want to give these nations a say in

Iraq's future? Does he expect them to share America's interest in a

free and stable Iraq, even though a democratic Iraq would undermine

their own authoritarian rule? Why do some American politicians want the

fox to guard the henhouse?

If the President's critics still believe that authority in Iraq

should be transferred to the U.N., then we should have waited for the

United Nations' approval before liberating Iraq. Let them explain to

the American people why they have such trust in the UN.

Let them explain why China, France, or Russia deserves a veto over

U.S. foreign policy.

Let them explain why the very countries that allegedly negotiated

clandestine oil leases with Saddam Hussein deserve a say in the

reconstruction of Iraq.

Let them explain how an organization that cannot manage its own

finances deserves to manage those of the Iraqis.

Let them explain why an organization that cannot provide for its own

security should be entrusted with stabilizing Iraq. There are many

things the United Nations can do well, but I don't believe managing

Iraq's fragile transition to democracy is one of them. I wish the

United Nations could be helpful on issues that are critical to American

security, but it is unsuited to that mission.

I support the United Nations. I hope it can reform itself and prevent

the worst abusers of human rights from sabotaging its laudable efforts

to protect the rights and dignity of mankind. I want the United Nations

to play a role in Iraq's reconstruction, and I hope it will send

humanitarian teams and election monitors to assist in building

democracy on the ruins of tyranny.

But the United Nations is not a collective security organization, and

it cannot replace America as a defender of liberty and democracy in

conflicts that are important to American security because too many of

its Members share neither our principles nor our interests.

Entrusting democracy in Iraq to the blue-helmeted bureaucrats at the

United Nations is not a plan, it is a fantasy.

Mr. President, I had not come to the floor to debate

my good friend from Nevada, but let me add a couple of words before we

adjourn.

I certainly agree with him, we need more forces in Iraq. Where they

need to come from is from the Iraqi people. General Petraeus, the

Commander of the famed 101st Airborne who took that unit into Iraq and

stationed it in northern Iraq around Mosul for about a year, has now

been given his next assignment. His next assignment is to go back to

Iraq--and he is there now--to help the Iraqi people develop a military

that can deal with the threat.

In the end, the area will be secure only if the Iraqi military and

Iraqi police have both the skill and the desire to protect their

country from these terrorists.

So, far from hoping we will get additional troops from around the

world, even though we have 20,000 troops there from other countries

now, the key to additional military in Iraq is in Iraq itself--Iraqi

soldiers, well trained, fighting for their own country. And that

training is well underway under the skilled leadership of General

Petraeus.

With regard to the U.N., I readily concede there are a few things

they can do well. They can put on elections. They can hand out

humanitarian aid. But they do not have an army. And they are

discredited in Iraq because of their involvement in the oil-for-food

scandal which robbed Iraqis, for 10 years, of the opportunity to eat

while this deal was enriching Saddam Hussein and his henchmen.

So the U.N. does not have a great reputation in Iraq, with good

reason. We hope the U.N. will be able to play a useful role in moving

Iraq from where it is today to a representative government, where it

will be by the end of 2005.

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