Mr. President, I am going to make a few comments this

morning about a hearing we just completed in the Democratic policy

committee, but I am waiting for some charts. While I am waiting for

those charts, I want to talk a moment about what is happening with

respect to the debate here in this Chamber dealing with the war in

Iraq. It relates to some things I said on the floor of the Senate

yesterday but I think really bear repeating.

We are talking about the war in Iraq, the need to attempt to change

course in Iraq, and yesterday I described again what the latest

National Intelligence Estimate tells us. Now, all of us have access to

this. There is a classified version, a top-secret version, and a

nonclassified version, but all of us have access to this information.

Here is what it says in the context of protecting this country and

providing security and safety for this country. Here is what the

National Intelligence Estimate says:

Here is what it says. It says the greatest terrorist threat to our

homeland is al-Qaida and its leadership, who even now are plotting

attacks against our country and who have a safe haven in the Pakistan

region. Now, if that is the case, it is quite clear that the central

fight on terrorism is not going door to door in Baghdad in the middle

of a civil war. Yet that is what we are doing.

I have asked this question, and I have repeatedly asked it: Why

should there be 1 square inch on the planet Earth that is secure or

safe for Osama bin Laden and the leadership of al-Qaida? Yet our

National Intelligence Estimate says they are in a safe haven. A

These are the people who boasted of killing Americans on 9/11.

They boasted about engineering 19 terrorists aboard airplanes full of

fuel and passengers, and they ran them into buildings, killing innocent

Americans. And 6 years later, our National Intelligence Estimate tells

us that those who engineered that attack have regrouped, are developing

new training camps for terrorists, and are in a safe haven and

developing new plans to attack America. That is unbelievable to me.

We are debating the war in Iraq, which our National Intelligence

Estimate also says is largely sectarian violence, or a civil war. Yes,

there is some al-Qaida in Iraq, but that is not the central front, and

that is not the central war on terrorism. If, in fact, our role as a

responsible country is to protect our citizens, then it seems to me we

would change course and change strategy so that we are taking the fight

to the terrorists and fighting the terrorists first.

We have been bogged down--longer now than in the Second World War--in

what has become a civil war in Iraq. Meanwhile, the greatest terrorist

threat to our homeland is in a safe haven. Osama bin Laden, al-

Zawahiri, and others, the leadership of al-Qaida, in a safe haven.

What are the consequences of that safe haven? Let me show a newspaper

report from last week. All of us understand this because we heard about

it. They picked up terrorists in Denmark, they picked up terrorists in

Germany. The terrorists in Germany were plotting attacks against the

largest U.S. military base in Europe. Where did those terrorists train?

In Pakistan. In terrorist training camps in Pakistan.

We are now seeing the fruit of what has been allowed to happen--the

leadership of al-Qaida in a safe or secure place, operating or

developing new training camps, training new terrorists to launch

attacks against our country. Meanwhile, we are going door to door in

Baghdad in the middle of sectarian

violence. If ever there is a description of a need for a change of

course, that is it. I do not understand why some fail to recognize what

has happened.

You can go back to February, you can go to June, you can go to the

disclosures and read them. This one is June:

I don't, for the life of me, understand the failure to recognize a

set of facts. This reminds me of the period prior to the invasion of

Iraq--a set of information that on its face later turns out to have

been wrong.

We don't need to be told what is right or wrong in terms of the set

of facts--read the facts, understand the facts. If the central threat

to our country, the greatest threat to our country, according to

National Intelligence Estimates, is al-Qaida and its leadership and its

reconstruction of its system of terror and the development of new

terrorist camps, if that is the case then, that is where America has to

be to wage the fight against that kind of terrorist group. Instead, we

are in the middle of a civil war. That is why we need a change in

course, a change in strategy.

It is not as some of my colleagues talk about, a plan for surrender.

It is simply deciding we are going to attack and launch an effort to

destroy that which represents the greatest threat to our country. It is

surprising to me that 6 years later there is anyplace on the planet

Earth that should, by our national intelligence officials, be declared

safe or secure for the leadership of al-Qaida. Yet that is exactly what

we read and what we hear and what we see in official reports. That is

not something we should accept.

I wish briefly today to talk about the results of a hearing that the

Democratic Policy Committee held this morning. The hearing was about

the subject of contractors in Iraq and also the subject of what are

called whistleblowers, those are people who are, in many cases, very

courageous people who blow the whistle on waste, fraud, and abuse on

behalf of the taxpayers of America; to say this is wrong and it must

stop.

We had some very disturbing testimony this morning. We had eight

witnesses. Four of them were whistleblowers. They have paid dearly for

having the courage to come forward.

Let me read the testimony of a Donald Vance, U.S. Navy veteran; 30-

year-old U.S. Navy veteran. When leaving the Navy, he chose to go to

Iraq as a civilian to help American efforts to rebuild the country. He

worked for a couple of private military contractors in Iraq. Here is

what happened to him.

What he saw with respect to the last contractor he worked with was

the sale of weapons, the sale of stolen weapons to interests who should

not have weapons, insurgents and others. So he began to report it. It

was something he believed very seriously. He reported it to his

superiors. He reported it to the FBI. He reported it to U.S. military

officials.

As a result, this U.S. Navy veteran found himself in big trouble.

Here is what he said.

When they released me, he said, they

A whistleblower who saw illegal activity, saw the selling of improper

guns in Iraq, some to insurgents, he felt, went to authorities. His

country, the United States of America, held him prisoner for 97 days.

No habeas corpus--which is in the Constitution, by the way. No right of

habeas corpus for an American citizen here. No right to contact an

attorney. If this doesn't disturb the American people, I don't know

what will disturb the American people.

We heard today from other witnesses talking about two things. One was

the abuse of the taxpayer by contracting firms in Iraq--waste, fraud,

and abuse that represents I think some of the worst waste, fraud, and

abuse in the history of this country. I have held, I believe, 10 or 12

hearings on this subject as chairman of the Policy Committee over the

last 3 years. The evidence is unbelievable: $40, $45 for a case of

Coca-Cola. It doesn't matter, the taxpayer is going to pay for that.

You order 50,000 pounds, 25 tons of nails, and they deliver the wrong

size, it doesn't matter, throw them on the sand of Iraq, the taxpayers

will pay for it. Or a $7,000-a-month lease payment for an SUV.

Henry Bunting over in Kuwait, working for Halliburton--KBR, a

subsidiary of Halliburton--he had a job as a purchaser. He said, as a

small example, I was supposed to order hand towels for the American

troops so I filled out an order to order white hand towels. My

supervisor said: No, we don't want those white hand towels. We want

hand towels with KBR, the logo of our company, embroidered on the

towels. Henry says:

These are small items, but there are large items. It is unbelievable

the amount of waste, fraud, and abuse we have uncovered. The fact is,

there seems to be an attitude in some parts of this Government to

sleepwalk through it all. It doesn't matter. It just doesn't matter.

Can you imagine a circumstance where a contractor, in this case

Halliburton, KBR, is charging us for 42,000 meals a day it is providing

American troops, American soldiers--42,000 meals a day, and it turns

out they are only giving 14,000 meals a day? They overcharged by 28,000

meals a day, according to Government estimates. How do you miss 28,000

meals a day?

The evidence is unbelievable when you go through this. This morning

we had a hearing about contracting abuse. We had testimony. I read some

from Donald Vance, who worked for a contractor in Iraq and was

imprisoned by

his Government for 97 days, not given the right to an attorney, not

given the right to contact anybody on the outside at any time during

the early stages of that confinement. That is unbelievable.

Bunnatine Greenhouse testified once again this morning, the highest

ranking civilian official in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. She said

the abuse related to the awarding of contracts--here is what she said

exactly. This is the highest ranking civilian official in the U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers.

Do you know what happened to this woman for that? She lost her job.

That is unbelievable, when you think about it. I talked to Secretary

Rumsfeld about this case. I talked to Secretary Gates about this case.

I talked to Deputy Secretary England about this case--nothing. Oh, we

are all looking at it, we are all investigating. They have been doing

that for 2 years.

I called the commanding officer of the Army Corps of Engineers when

Bunnatine Greenhouse was given this job. This is a woman with three

master's degrees, judged by everyone from outside the Government who

deals with contractors as outstanding, given outstanding references on

her performance reviews all along, until somehow she got into a

situation where she said: I saw things going on with sole-source

contracting, awarding big contracts, billions of dollars of contracts

and doing it improperly, abusively. she said,

and all of a sudden she got into trouble and they demoted her.

I called her former commanding officer, General Ballard, now retired.

I called him at home one night and I said: Tell me about Bunnatine

Greenhouse, because she has paid for her courage to speak out with her

career. Here is what her boss said:

This is an outstanding employee. But because she had the courage as a

whistleblower to stand up and report things that were wrong, abusive

behavior, behavior that abuses the American taxpayer, she paid for it

with her job.

We can't let that continue to happen. That is why I held this

hearing. The best disinfectant for bad behavior is sunlight, and I

hope, as we continue to expose more and more of this, I hope we can put

an end to it. Those who have the courage to come forward and report

wrongdoing, to report waste and fraud and graft and corruption--in my

judgment, we ought to thank them. There is a story, I don't have a copy

of it here, a story in the USA Today newspaper, written by an

investigative reporter, that deals with these issues, the issues of

oversight of contractors and the oversight of contracts that are let

with respect to the war in Iraq. What we have found--Senator Wyden and

I have worked on this in the Senate--the Pentagon wants to hire

companies to oversee other companies. You can't do that. You can't

delegate that responsibility. Who is looking out for the taxpayer here?

We had testimony today from Robert Isackson. Robert Isackson is a

patriotic American. He was someone who saw criminal activity with a

company called Custer Battles. He reported it. For that, he and others

who were with him were surrounded by people with guns, threatened. He

came today and expressed profound disappointment at the way the Federal

Government has responded or failed to respond. As a person who had the

courage to be a whistleblower, who saw something wrong and decided to

try to right it, as a person who stood up for the best interests of

this country and its taxpayers, we owe him a debt of gratitude.

And yet we see today that what has happened, systematically--the

Associated Press wrote a big article about this, exposing it. What has

happened systematically under this administration to whistleblowers is

they are abused, not protected; not thanked, but abused. I would hope

whoever in this administration is responsible and listening and

understanding might decide that has to stop.

I will speak more at some point soon about the results of this

hearing. My colleague Senator Grassley from Iowa I know has spent a lot

of time on whistleblower issues, and other colleagues have as well. It

is very important for us that when people come forward to report acts

of wrongdoing, fraud, waste, abuse, that this country says thank you

and follows up and will not allow those people to be abused and

penalized. Yet, all too often, that has not been the case. It has to

change.

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