Mr. President, a few days ago, Congress and the American

public were treated to a sales job on Iraq that would have made any

used car salesman proud. We heard the half-truths and rosy visions put

forth by authoritative diplomats in dark suits and ribboned and starred

generals in uniform, topped off by the pomp and circumstance of a well-

rehearsed Oval Office speech. Visions were painted for us of a peaceful

and prosperous oasis of democracy and stability in the turbulent

geography of the Middle East, if only--and only if--our gallant

soldiers stayed for just a little while longer to bring the dream to

reality. Such a grand vision, of course, produced yet another new Bush

administration slogan, which fits very nicely on

a bumper sticker for the back of the lemon this team of salesmen is

trying to peddle.

Like any good used car salesman, the President insists that we take

him up on his once-in-a-lifetime good deal, just as he has insisted,

each and every time, that he needs a little more time for his war in

Iraq. If we don't buy in once again, Iraq will descend into chaos,

militias will commence with ethnic cleansing, terrorists will set up

complexes from which to launch attacks on the United States, and Iran

or Syria, or both, will develop nuclear weapons and invade Iraq on

their way to Israel.

Mr. President, I suggest that we stop and take a little time to

consider this offer, consider what was said and what was not said. It

is long past time to lift the hood and kick the tires.

President Bush said in his speech that things were going so well in

Iraq that the extra troops needed for the surge could begin returning

home, as long as conditions continued to improve. In the only time line

that he laid out, the President suggested that, subject to his fine

print, the number of U.S. troops in Iraq might be reduced to 137,000 by

July 2008. While that is certainly welcome news, it carefully neglects

to mention that this reduction would still leave 7,000 more troops in

Iraq than were present before the so-called ``temporary surge'' began

in February 2007. Frankly, that is not much of a drawdown, given all

the so-called ``progress'' in Iraq cited by the President.

The President said in 2003, Now the

President says that in December, it will be time to

the President said, and I quote,

In 2003, over 4 years ago, when U.S. forces overthrew the regime of

Saddam Hussein, there was supposed to be a rapid transition to a new

civil government in Iraq. In all the years since the invasion, civil

society has not yet put down strong roots despite our efforts. By every

assessment and every benchmark, it is not happening now, either. The

Iraqi central government is nowhere near achieving reconciliation,

and equitable arrangements for the sharing of oil revenue or holding

elections are but dim and distant visions. Iraqis have not assumed

control over their own security. Indeed, independent assessments of

Iraq have suggested that Iraqi security forces are riddled with

sectarian corruption and will not be capable of providing security for

some time to come, if ever.

U.S. troops have been ``partnering'' with Iraqi troops for years now,

and U.S. troops have been training, equipping and supporting Iraqi

forces to the tune of billions of dollars. U.S. troops have been

conducting counterterrorism operations, as the President also noted in

his speech. So what, pray tell, is new or different about this

strategy? I can see nothing by which to judge success so that our

troops may It is just a nice paint job slathered

across the same old junk car.

The warranties on this new speech and this new sales job expire as

soon as the car is driven off the lot. The only timeline offered by

President Bush or General Petraeus ran out of time after July 2008. The

pretty six-colored chart that General Petraeus used to show the troop

drawdown associated with the transition had no dates on it past July

2008, though it was pretty clear that U.S. troops would be in Iraq for

a very long time to come. President Bush explicitly said that if he has

his way, U.S. troops would be in Iraq long past his exit from the White

House. He boldly asserts that he will leave his staggering foreign

policy calamity for someone else to clean up. Talk about passing the

buck.

Mr. President, we simply cannot afford another slick White House

sales job. Too many young men and women have died or have been maimed

in this horrific war. We owe it to them to take a good hard look at the

facts. General Petraeus, in his testimony, suggested that because of

the the number of Iraqi deaths have decreased, indicating

That may or may not be true--I do not know--but I do know

that General Petraeus carefully did not note that the number of U.S.

deaths in Iraq actually increased during the surge period, compared to

the same periods in prior years. General Petraeus also did not note

that the U.S. military death rate in Iraq, that is, the average number

of deaths per month, also continues to climb from prior years.

General Petraeus pointed to the decrease in the number of improvised

explosive device, or lED, attacks during the surge period of June

through August as another sign of progress. It is true that the number

of attacks dropped--as it does every year during the very hottest

months of June, July, and August. But what General Petraeus did not say

is that the number of U.S. deaths from IEDs increased during the surge

period, compared to the same period in prior years. That, as they say,

is the rest of the story. That is the whole truth, not carefully

cherry-picked statistics designed to bolster the President's pitch for

progress.

The President and his men also did not talk about the price tag of

this shiny little war sedan. No need to discuss that before they have

hooked us into writing the check. But the cost of this war should be

uppermost in our minds, as the Senate addresses the Defense

authorization bill, and certainly before the Senate considers yet

another war funding supplemental appropriations bill--the largest one

ever.

Congress has already appropriated over $450 billion for the war in

Iraq, and if Congress approves the President's latest request for

supplemental funds, that figure will grow to over $600 billion during

fiscal year 2008. That is a price tag with nine zeroes in it, folks.

These direct costs do not cover the many hidden, indirect costs of this

war, such as higher Veterans Administration costs, more veterans'

disability payments, the considerable interest on the additional debt,

higher oil and gasoline prices, increased security costs here at home,

and the incalculable damage done to our image and reputation in the

world because of this war. The combined direct and indirect costs and

obligations of this war will exceed $1 trillion by the most

conservative estimates. Many economists believe that the costs are much

higher.

That $600 billion or $1 trillion price tag also does not begin to

cover the lost opportunity costs--all the ways in which money now spent

on Iraq could have been used to make our bridges safer, secure our

border, improve education, or to prepare for and rebuild after natural

disasters and weather-related farming failures. That money could have

been used to develop safe, clean, alternative energy sources so that

the United States would not have to rely so much on oil from the Middle

East or other volatile regions of the world.

Nor does that $600 billion or $1 trillion cover the costs of keeping

upwards of 130,000 troops in Iraq for the many additional years the

President and his men suggest will be necessary to achieve their vision

of progress and success. It boggles the mind to consider the long-term

costs of buying this war.

We all say that we support the troops. These brave men and women have

been given a near impossible task, which they have performed with

dedication, professionalism, courage, and honor. The Congress has

provided everything the generals have asked for, and more. The

President has taken that support for our men and women in uniform to

imply support and even validation of his policy. He wants to keep the

U.S. military tied down in Iraq indefinitely, trying to bargain for a

little more time, a little more time, time and time again, never

grasping that his policy is fatally flawed. History shows the fallacy

of thinking that democracy can be force-fed at the point of a gun.

In the fifth year of this misguided, infernal war, I am convinced

that the best way to support our troops is to bring them home--home,

sweet home--and the only way to get them home may be to somehow

restrict the funds for this disastrous, awful war. We have tried this

before and the President, the President, vetoed the bill. I am here

today to insist that we must try again. Strings must be attached to

this money. This Senator will support no more blank checks for Iraq.

On October 11, 2002, I was one of only 23 Senators who voted against

the authorization that led to this awful, infernal war. I call on my

colleagues, for the sake of our soldiers and for the sake of our

Nation, to remember that half-truths and misleading claims are what led

to this war. We can all recall that on February 5, 2003, the President

sent Colin Powell, both a ribboned and starred general and a respected

diplomat, to the United Nations to sell this war to the UN and to the

Nation. Secretary Powell painted frightening visions of anthrax, truck

and rail car-mounted mobile weapons laboratories, and nuclear weapons--

none of it was accurate. The Nation was led to believe that our troops

would be greeted as liberators, and that oil money would pay for Iraq's

reconstruction. Now while the half-truths have changed, the strategy of

misleading the Nation remains the same.

Iraq may descend further into chaos if U.S. troops leave now, or it

may descend into chaos whenever they leave. As long as the United

States keeps the peace in Iraq, there is no incentive for Iraqis to

maintain the peace on their own. After nearly 5 years of this awful,

terrible war, more than 3,800 deaths, over 27,000 wounded, and no end

in sight, we must change course. This war, this draining, desultory,

dreadful occupation of Iraq must end.