Mr. President, I want to address the repeated attacks

towards the Bush administration's role in Iraq. Yesterday, one critic

claimed that our unilateral policy in Iraq has steadily drifted from

tragedy to tragedy and made America less safe. The very mention of Iraq

and the current situation there incites what I have begun to call the

to launch into steady streams of empty rhetoric

against our plans in Iraq. Just this week these critics said that our

troops are paying the price for flawed policy. These brazenly political

claims have no basis, in fact, and serve no purpose other than to

undermine the administration in a time of war.

In liberating Iraq, we have rid the nation and the rest of the world

from the danger of Saddam Hussein. 46 of the 55 of his most wanted

regime members have been captured or killed. In removing this tyrant

from power and undermining his regime, we have brought about increased

security in a nation that at one time barely comprehended the term.

Today, over 150,000 Iraqis, including 75,000 new police personnel, are

protecting the Iraqi people. Recently the Iraqi Governing Council

signed the Transitional Administrative Law. This unprecedented

framework promises long overdue civil rights for all Iraqis. It ensures

freedom of religion and worship, the right to free expression, the

right to peacefully assemble, the right to be treated equally under the

law, the right to stand for election and cast a ballot secretly, the

right to privacy, and the right to a fair, public and speedy trial. We

have removed many barriers in the Iraqi society and allowed women to

finally play a role in every day life--including the new Iraqi

government.

To abandon our mission in Iraq today would undermine all we have

accomplished up until now. We would leave behind a devastating breeding

ground for terrorists. More importantly, it would give the insurgents

in Iraq reason to believe they have won--that they finally succeeded in

driving us out and halting the process of peace. The recent surge of

violence in Iraq is not indicative of failed policy--rather it is proof

that terrorists see freedom arriving there--and it terrifies them. Just

recently I read of that fear firsthand in a memo written by captured al

Qaida operative Zarqawi. Concerned that the Mujahidin may lose its

footing in Iraq he wrote:

The very idea of freedom incites fear in the hearts of terrorists

across the world. Insurgents from Syria, Libya, Iran and other

countries continue to cling to the fruitless hope that their violence

will force the coalition forces out and allow the eradicated reign of

terror back in. They don't just hate freedom--they fear it. These

terrorist cells infiltrating Iraq know that the introduction of

democracy and peace in the Middle East is only the beginning of the

annihilation of terrorism worldwide.

The accomplishments are many, and the truth is the liberation of Iraq

is just one battle in the war on terror. The process of creating a

democracy and turning the government over to an entire new governing

council will take time. But we are a nation of our word. President

George Bush has told the world that we would return power to the Iraqi

people on June 30, and we intend to stick to that deadline. Our desire

is to restore sovereignty to the people of Iraq--and ensure peace and

stability in the transfer. To abandon Iraq prior to either of those

goals being accomplished would be a failed mission--and that simply is

not an option.

While it is important to note the administration's successes in Iraq,

Americans should also be aware that our actions in Iraq have made us

safer here in the U.S. President Bush recognized that in order to

contain the growing threat of terrorism from Iraq we had to eliminate

it at its source. Our President chooses to allow the war on terror to

be fought in Kabul and Baghdad, rather than Washington, DC, or New

York. As he so boldly explained just recently, his desire was not to

stand idly by. He said:

I applaud our administration for carrying out their mission in Iraq

so effectively. Our role in Iraq has brought about freedom to 50

million Iraqis and Afghans and underscored America's character in

keeping our word. Former secretary of State George Shultz said it best

this week when he wrote:

The war on terror will not easily be won, but America is up to the

task. May God bless our brave men and women in uniform fighting for

democracy and freedom--and God bless this land of the free, America.

I yield the floor.