Mr. President, I rise today to inform the Senate of an

undertaking that has, in my view, not received adequate attention in

the press or by the American public. This undertaking has required

tremendous planning, and has been on a massive scale.

As the news from Iraq dominates our attention, an important and

notable success story has gone largely unnoticed. I refer to the

massive troop rotation in the Iraq theater that is now nearing

completion by our Armed Forces. This is the largest U.S. troop rotation

since World War II--more than 250,000 U.S. service members have been

involved.

Planning for this rotation of forces in Iraq has been underway for

many months. The meticulous quality of that planning, the absolute

attention to detail by thousands of military planners, logisticians,

and transportation specialists has resulted in a near flawless rotation

of forces.

Consider for a moment the sheer size of the logistics effort

involved in rotation over a quarter million combat troops, in

mobilizing them, in transporting them by sea or air, supplying them,

and in simply keeping them sheltered and fed. And now, consider doing

all of that in a place that is nearly half a world away, and at the

same time, continuing the pace of military operations and combat in

Iraq, without skipping a beat.

New units began flowing into the region in December of last year,

and to date, over 95 percent of the service members deploying to Iraq

have arrived in the region.

I would like the Senate to consider some of the facts and figures

for the deployment and redeployment, or return, of forces in that area.

Over 900,000 short tons of equipment and supplies have been shipped

to support operation Iraqi Freedom.

Over fifty-seven sealift ships have sailed, delivering more than

426,000 short tons into theater, and 13 ships have returned 88,000

short tons back stateside.

Nearly 3,000 airlift missions have been completed, and over 63,000

flight hours.

Ninety-seven thousand soldiers scheduled for redeployment have

returned home from Iraq.

Over 91,000 reserve component soldiers were mobilized for Operation

Iraqi Freedom 1, and over 54,000 for Operation Iraqi Freedom 2.

Last month I was privileged to travel to the Central Command Theater

to see first hand the magnitude of this effort. I traveled with my good

friends the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and John Warner,

and the senior Senator from South Carolina, Fritz Hollings. We saw our

forces in Baghdad and in Balad, Iraq and traveled into Afghanistan to

visit our forces there.

I simply cannot say how absolutely impressed we were with the

fighting spirit and combat power displayed by these young Americans.

We spent some time with the 1st Armored Division in Baghdad, and MG

Martin Dempsey's absolutely impressive forces. General Dempsey's forces

are providing stability and security in a dangerous part of Baghdad.

They know they have an important mission. You could see the dedication

and courage in each of their faces. They know why they are there.

We also spent some time with Joint Task Force 180, in Baghram,

Afghanistan. MG Lloyd Austin, a really impressive commander of the 10th

Mountain Division. His soldiers are pursuing Taliban and al-Qaida

remnants in the mountains of Afghanistan. His forces, too, are

remarkably bright and dedicated young men and women. Spending time with

them was inspiring to us all.

We had planned to visit the 1st Battalion of the 501st Parachute

Infantry Regiment from Alaska. They are deployed to Khost, Aghnanistan,

in the rough mountains near the Pakistan border.

Unfortunately, an aircraft malfunction required that we change

planes, and that delay meant we were unable to make that stop to see

those Alaskan forces. We are terribly proud of them and all of the

forces there around the country in that area.

My friends and I also went to Kuwait and saw forces moving into and

out of Iraq. Kuwait is where much of the logistics operation for the

troop rotation is based. The level of this effort is nothing short of

remarkable to see.

In Kuwait, we visited with troops from the 4th Infantry Division, the

division that captured Saddam Hussein, as they were moving home and

preparing their gear for return. We visited with these troops at the

where each vehicle is cleaned from top to bottom before

returning home so there is no contamination from the wartime area.

It takes nearly 8 hours to fully clean a vehicle of all the dirt,

sand and wear that accumulate. Dozens of these wash racks were

operating day and night,

24/7, until every last piece of gear is cleaned and ready to return

home.

Many of the division's vehicles were staged and lined up, ready to

return home. That was truly a sight to see--rows of rows and rows of

all types of military vehicles, scores of vehicles. I saw the

remarkable size and scope of our logistics effort to rotate these

forces in Iraq, and the magnitude of that effort is simply amazing.

General Robert Barrow, a former commandant of the Marine Corps, in

1980 said:

That statement has again been proven true by the nearly

flawless rotation of U.S. forces in and out of Iraq. That rotation is

now nearly complete, and it is a remarkable achievement. This massive

movement of forces and equipment, the largest since World War II, has

largely gone unreported and little noticed by the American people.

However, it is a true success story and one that needs to be told, and

needs to be told on the floor of the Senate.

This rotation of forces is an absolute testament to the will,

dedication and commitment of our men and women in uniform. They are to

be commended for what they do for all Americans, and once again, they

have made us proud.