Mr. President, a year ago this Saturday, President Bush

dressed up in a flight suit, flew out to the aircraft carrier Abraham

Lincoln, and declared in Iraq.

Our mission was far from accomplished then, and it is far from

accomplished now.

At his press conference in the White House earlier this month, the

President was asked if he knew of any mistakes he had made, and he said

he couldn't think of any. It is too much to expect that he would have

mentioned Iraq, but he might at least have mentioned the trip to the

carrier. The trip was nothing more than a photo op tailored for the

2004 election.

Then, as now, the President had no plan and no strategy about how

America can stabilize Iraq, bring our soldiers home with dignity and

honor, and accomplish the mission. Then, as now, we are muddling

through day by day, hoping for the best, fearing the worst.

Iraq was the big mistake. There was no urgent need to go to war in

Iraq. Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator. But he did not pose the

kind of immediate threat to our national security that could justify a

unilateral, preventive war without the broad support of the

international community.

It is clear that the Bush administration manipulated,

misrepresented, and distorted the available intelligence in order to

justify the war in Iraq. They put a spin on the intelligence and a spin

on the truth. They said Saddam was acquiring nuclear weapons. He

wasn't. They said he had close ties to al-Qaida. He didn't. Congress

would never have voted to authorize the war if we had known the truth.

Our military had a brilliant plan to win the war. Our soldiers

performed brilliantly during the 3-week initial military operation. But

the President had no plan to win the peace. He said we would be treated

as liberators, and in the first day or two after the statue of Saddam

fell, we were. But then the massive looting began. Resentment by the

Iraqi people began, and the liberation quickly turned into an

occupation.

Iraq has become a quagmire. It may well go down as the worst blunder

in the entire history of American foreign policy.

Iraq is George Bush's Vietnam. By going to war in Iraq, President

Bush squandered the immense good will of the world community we had won

in the wake of 9/11, and we are paying a high price in the lives of our

troops and the respect of other nations.

By going to war in Iraq, President Bush has made the real war on

terrorism harder to win. We left the war in Afghanistan unfinished. We

should never have given al-Qaida precious time to recover and regroup

and expand their reach. By doing so, we made future terrorist attacks

on the United State more likely.

Before the war, Pentagon officials assured Congress that firm plans

were in place to secure Iraq and rebuild it. The reality is that the

administration had a plan on paper, but not a real plan--and precious

little paper at that.

The administration's post-war planning was based on a quicksand of

false assumptions. It has been hamstrung by blunder, after blunder,

after blunder. The continuing arrogance of the administration has

blinded it to the cold, hard facts about the immense challenge of post-

war reconstruction in Iraq.

Based on our experience in Bosnia, in Kosovo, in East Timor, and in

Afghanistan, we knew security could be a profound problem, with major

challenges from a restless population. Yet we had no broad security

plan, as the early looting quickly showed, and a dangerous security

situation still exists today.

The administration assumed that we would be able to draw on thousands

of Saddam's police force to protect security--but in the critical early

weeks that followed the war, they were nowhere to be found, and too

many of their officers turned out to be thugs and torturers.

The administration assumed that Iraqi exile leaders could return to

Iraq to rally the population and lead the new government, but they

were--and still are--strongly resented by the Iraqi people.

Today, with the transfer of sovereignty scheduled for the end of

June, the administration still has no idea about who should run the

country. They assumed that after a few hundred of Saddam's top advisers

were removed from power, large numbers of local officials would remain

to run the government--but the government crumbled. Today, it remains

in shambles.

Wrongly, we continue to rely primarily on a military solution for

politically inspired violence. Look at Fallujah. Let us hope we don't

have to hear Secretary Rumsfeld say,

It is painfully clear that the President and those who advocated the

war have lost all credibility on Iraq. They did not understand the

situation going into the war. They do not understand the situation now.

And they have no plan to extricate us from the quagmire they created.

The result has been chaos for the Iraqi people, and continuing mortal

danger for our troops.

We cannot cut and run. Our soldiers deserve a genuine strategy to

deal with the continuing crisis.

All of us who have concerns about the administration's past policy

welcome the reinvolvement of the United Nations in Iraq and the

administration's openness to a new U.N. resolution. The question is

whether the administration's efforts will provide any significant

relief for our troops.

There is no sign of that yet. The Bush administration has poked its

finger in the eye of almost every other nation in the world, and they

have little incentive or interest in coming to our rescue.

Our military has been bearing a disproportionate share of the burden.

We have 80 percent of the troops on the ground, and we have suffered 80

percent of the casualties. That burden is increasing, with Spain,

Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador pulling troops out of the country,

and others threatening to do the same.

Very little will change after the transfer of sovereignty and under

the administration's plan to work with the international community. It

is not even a genuine transfer of sovereignty. We'll still be running

the show in Iraq. A U.S. occupation by another name is still a U.S.

occupation.

We need a real change in our foreign policy, not a cosmetic change.

Only a new administration that has the trust and confidence of the rest

of the world will be able to bring in the international community to

provide international troops, provide international police, provide

international financial resources, achieve a workable political

solution, and, relieve the burden on our military and bring them home

with dignity and honor.

Mr. President, our mission in Iraq is far from accomplished. Our men

and women in uniform know it. The Iraqi people know it. And the

American people know it too.

I withhold the remainder of my time.