Mr. President, 10 days ago I had the opportunity to travel

to Iraq to visit our troops on the front line and the troups serving in

support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. On that same trip to Baghdad, I had

the opportunity to spend time with Ambassador Jerry Bremer as well as

the new Prime Minister of the Iraqi interim government. He was

appointed Prime Minister 3 or 4 days before our arrival. His name is

Dr. Ayad Allawi. He happens to be a neurologist who spent part of his

time and his training in England several years after I had the

opportunity to do some of my training in England.

Also during this trip, we had the opportunity to discuss with, listen

to, and receive briefings from our Nation's senior military officers

who are currently leading our efforts in Iraq. I was joined by my

colleagues Senator Bob Bennett and Senator John Ensign.

I will take a few moments to share with my Senate colleagues some of

what we saw and learned on this trip. We didn't say very much about it

because of the tributes last week. But about 8 days ago we were in

Baghdad in Iraq. Some of what I will say you have heard before, but a

lot of it you have not heard in large part because the media--both the

media in Iraq and here in the United States--tends to cover the

terrorist events, and it is very appropriate, but tends not to see what

is going on on the ground in terms of what our soldiers see and what

the Iraqi people are seeing. Given what we read and what we see in the

media every day, we had the same experience today of waking up and

opening the newspaper with yet another terrorist act. We expected to

see things getting worse and worse on a daily basis. We expected to

find a mission that was struggling, demoralized troops, collapsed

infrastructure, and distressed Iraqi people. However, we found the

opposite. We found hope. We found optimism. We found progress. Yes, we

were there when terrorist activities were occurring, but in balance to

that, and juxtaposed, we saw tremendous success. We went, in part, to

encourage others. We actually came back very encouraged and inspired.

The transfer to sovereignty, I am absolutely convinced, having just

been there, will be successful. The transfer of responsibility is well

underway. Again, I did not realize fully until going over there 9 days

ago that most of the responsibility has already been transferred to the

interim Iraqi government. The 33 new ministers have all been appointed.

Most, or a majority of them, are already running their cabinet position

or their department. The new Iraqi government, the interim government,

which will serve until the elections, appears to be very strong. People

have tremendous respect for these leaders.

We began our trip in Kuwait. On the outskirts of Kuwait City, we

visited Camp Wolverine. We were briefed there by the Deputy Commander

of U.S. Central Command, LTG Lance Smith. We learned how the command is

fighting throughout the very large theater that begins in East Africa,

the border being the Sudan area and extending across the globe to the

``Stans.'' That entire theater is aggressively and with a great deal of

success carrying out its responsibility, including fighting this war on

terror. The 25 or 26 countries are all involved, both as a region and

also as individual countries, in fighting this war on this global

network of terror.

In countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, we are actively engaged in

combat operations. They were described in great detail to us. Alongside

our coalition partners and others, we are fighting a preventive war

with diplomacy and economic and other nonmilitary means. It is a global

effort. It is a comprehensive war on terror that is being fought. Like

weeds in a garden, our commanders realize if you do not take action

promptly, aggressively, and broadly, terrorism will take root, it will

grow deep, and it will spread uncontrollably.

After our briefings, Senators Bennett and Ensign and I met with the

service men and women, the soldiers who are out there literally on the

front line day in and day out. In Kuwait City there is an entryway

where everybody coming to that part of the world is channeled--our

soldiers--as well as when they exit to go home on leave for a few

weeks. It is remarkable how our soldiers are briefed and debriefed and

that transition is made.

Later that day we had the opportunity to dine with soldiers from our

respective States. I had the pleasure of sharing a meal with many

soldiers from Tennessee, including Tech SGT Kenneth Clark from

Millington, MAJ Jon Hays from Chattanooga, MSG John Russell from Bluff

City, and SGT Otis Fox from Memphis. I understate when I say that being

able to have a meal with them, with the Tennessee flag up next to us,

made me and Tennessee quite proud.

The next day we spent in Iraq where, as I mentioned, we met with

Ambassador Bremer and his staff. This is a view from the ground from

where we were 8 to 9 days ago. He made very clear he is encouraged by

the caliber of the new Iraqi interim government. It was in that meeting

that I realized much of the responsibility for sovereignty has already

taken place. The new ministers are actually up and running right now.

We also had an update on the Iraqi economy and reconstruction

efforts, which, again, are doing much better

than what our media or a sampling of our media in the United States

would ever imply. The statistics speak for themselves: Unemployment is

nearly half of what it was before the war; inflation has been cut in

half; oil production is nearly nine times higher than it was a year ago

at this time; bank deposits are up; microcredit loans are flowing.

From a medical standpoint, 85 percent of the Iraqi children have been

immunized, and 240 hospitals--all of the hospitals--have been opened.

As we walked through hospitals, they are open and serving people. There

is actually some very good equipment there that Saddam had purchased,

but it was sitting in containers for years and years after he purchased

it and left in the hallways. That equipment is now being brought

online.

Over 1,200 preventive medical clinics are operating. The CPA and the

coalition forces have completed over 18,000 individual reconstruction

projects. About $7 billion to $8 billion of the reconstruction money

has been committed as of June 5.

We also learned that the reconstruction money which is so important

in terms of giving hope to the Iraqi people but also in rebuilding the

infrastructure has begun to flow much more freely now that a lot of the

contracting issues have been worked out on the ground. These projects

are going a long way in terms of reinvigorating the Iraqi economy,

getting the country back on its feet, and giving hope to that

individual Iraqi person or that individual Iraqi family after decades

of neglect of this infrastructure, with no hope for decades because of

Saddam Hussein.

Reducing unemployment is a critical need. That is why the

reconstruction money, in part, is so important. Unemployment must be

improved before we will have a truly secure situation on the ground. It

is critical to move toward a full-blown democracy in Iraq.

I mentioned I had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Allawi, who I was

very impressed with. He is a British trained neurologist, a

longstanding opponent of Saddam Hussein's regime. He is the new Prime

Minister. He will serve for the next 6 months. He is a man of great

character. He shares our strategic goals and approach. He had talked to

his country the day before and was covered extensively by the media in

that part of the world. He talked about the sacrifice the United States

has made, the fact that, yes, the security and elections are first and

foremost, but it will be important to have the coalition forces and the

United States present as we turn over to sovereignty but also help them

rebuild their police forces and rebuild their military. We were the

first delegation to have the opportunity to meet with Dr. Allawi, and,

again, we were very impressed. I will say more about that meeting

tomorrow.

Regarding the cabinet itself and the 33 ministers, I asked the people

on the ground about the 33 ministers who have been appointed. They are

a broad, very educated group, very diverse group, geographically

representative. There are six women. Two out of three have Ph.D.s. It

seems to be both from a civilian--the Iraqi people--and a military

viewpoint there is a tremendous amount of respect for the quality and

the caliber of this cabinet.

A highlight for me personally, which occurred later in the day, was

to visit the U.S. military hospital in Baghdad. Again, as a physician,

it was invigorating to be able to meet our doctors and our nurses, our

thoracic surgeons, our vascular surgeons who are treating anywhere from

70 to 100 patients in that facility every day.

We were able to meet a number of our service members who were being

treated in the hospital who had been injured in the last several days.

Again, to see their real patriotism, their pride, their optimism, even

though they had just been injured the day before, was really

gratifying.

I met with Greg Kidwell, a soldier from Clarksville, TN, who is

serving in the military and serving his country by caring for patients

in the hospital. It is a very impressive hospital facility. As a

physician, as someone who spent 20 years in hospitals, this is top-

notch, high-quality care from some of the most competent and dedicated

professionals our country can muster.

Following the visit to the hospital, we visited with the 1st Armored

Division near Baghdad. We had lunch with soldiers from the 1st Armored

Division. Again, a number of Tennesseans who worked with the 1st

Armored Division, such as SP Tim Griswold of Fayetteville, MSG Ron

Miller of Clarksville, CAPT Mike Loveall of Gallatin, and SP Michael

Johnson of Chattanooga were there. We were joined by several other

soldiers from the 168th Military Police Battalion from Tennessee as

well.

Afterwards, we were briefed by senior officers from the division.

They gave us an overview of the situation, which was interesting

because it was their responsibility to address the soldier militias. We

had the opportunity to talk to them. This was several days after they

had a huge amount of success in terms of addressing and defeating many

of Muqtada al Sadr's militias in a number of cities throughout the

south, having been moved from Baghdad down south. It is clear to them,

and everybody we talked to, that Sadr is not supported by most Iraqis,

but only by the disenfranchised and a fringe element.

Quite clearly, we owe the success of the 1st Armored Division to the

competency, training, and motivation of our soldiers, and the overall

success in all these activities to the success of our soldiers and our

marines who risk their lives on a daily basis to bring freedom and

democracy to Iraq.

Later that afternoon, we journeyed to the headquarters of the

Multinational Forces Iraq, which was formerly the CJTF-7. Again, we had

a comprehensive overview of the situation in Iraq. We left there

impressed with our troops, with their character, with their courage,

and with their determination to so selflessly accomplish their assigned

mission. They are answering the call to duty to bring freedom and

security so others may live free of tyranny.

I say all this saddened and well aware of the news that was presented

last Friday, Saturday, and Sunday; and that is, this increased level of

terrorism and violence in Iraq, including the murder of the Deputy

Foreign Minister, Bassam Salih Kubba, which is a terrible loss. But we

must be aware of and I think it is important for the American people to

understand both what we were told and what we saw. We were told by our

military commanders, we were told by the Prime Minister, and we were

told by the President of Iraq, who was here this past week, that there

is going to be an increased level of terrorist activity. The terrorists

want to defeat--they say the United States and they say the coalition,

but they want to defeat any government, any governing authority. So

that level of terrorism is likely. We should not be surprised if it

increases between now and June 30, and indeed after sovereignty is

passed off to the Iraqis in the weeks after the new government takes

hold.

After June 30, the relationship between the United States and Iraq is

going to be one of a strategic partnership, as we move from an

occupying force to that of a mission and a very large embassy there.

Our focus is going to be twofold. No. 1 is going to be security and No.

2 is to make sure, in terms of a strategic partnership, that these

elections occur and that they occur in a free and fair way. So it is

security and elections. That is what the focus will be over the next 6

months.

We, of course, will continue with the reconstruction progress that

has been made, improving the Iraqi economy. At the same time, we will

continue to fight terrorism now in partnership with the interim Iraqi

government. The terrorists want, and the terrorists have as their

objective, to derail the sovereignty to the Iraqi people. They are

targeting the growing middle class in Iraq. They want to keep Iraqis

out of voting booths. They want to keep them out of hospitals. They

want to keep them out of schools. They want to keep them out of

markets. And they want to accomplish that through fear.

But it is clear, in talking to the Iraqi people and the civilians and

our military, that they simply are not going to succeed. That is what

we left with: They simply are not going to succeed. Most Iraqis do not

support these groups. They understand the terrorists are attacking the

people of Iraq. It is going to be very helpful that when the Prime

Minister, who had not met anybody from our legislative branch--the

first words he said to me and to the Iraqi people were, using the Iraqi

voice:

The terrorists are not after you, the United States, and not even after

the coalition. The terrorists are after the Iraqi people. Every

action--blowing up an oil line, blowing up a water line--hurts the

Iraqi people, not the United States and not the coalition itself. That

voice coming from the Iraqi leadership I think will be hugely helpful.

Iraqis do not like the U.S. occupation in and of itself. They are a

proud people and they want that sovereignty. Yes, we are going from

occupation to mission. Iraqis do want freedom. They do want democracy.

But the President this week, with whom many of us had the opportunity

to meet, and the Prime Minister said the goal is democracy.

Last week--and I will close shortly--the U.N. Security Council

unanimously approved a new U.S. resolution. The resolution outlines

that transfer of sovereignty to the new interim Iraqi government and

the role of the coalition forces after June 30. The world community is

now united behind the Iraqi people, and with every passing day the

Iraqi people, with the coalition's help, are building the capacity to

govern themselves.

As in the past, we must stay the course. We will stay the course. We

will keep true to the principles. We will have continued faith in our

superb Armed Forces. We know that history in the end will be on our

side.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.