Mr. President, I rise today to help frame the issue in

Iraq. The American people deserve straight forward answers on issues of

war and national security; especially when their lives are directly

threatened and our military forces are engaged around the world in the

war on terrorism. And it is not just our military forces that are at

risk; our diplomats, intelligence professionals, and ordinary civilians

working in war zones all face enormous danger from a very treacherous

and barbaric enemy.

The recent, brutally grotesque beheadings of innocent Americans

Eugene Armstrong on Monday and Jack Hensley yesterday are just two of

many examples of the kind of evil that we face and why it must be

eradicated.

Ambiguity is something we probably should expect in a heated

political campaign, but anything less than total candor on national

security issues is not acceptable.

The junior senator from Massachusetts has accused President Bush of

``colossal failures of judgment'' on his plan for Iraq. He then went on

to lay out his own four-point plan for handling the conflict in Iraq.

His four points were, No. 1, to get more help from other nations; No.

2, provide better training for Iraqi security forces; No. 3, provide

benefits to the Iraqi people; and No. 4, ensure democratic elections

can be held next year as promised.

I have no problem with this plan, because it is the short term and

long term plan now in place by the Bush administration. Our President

has consistently and assiduously worked with our allies to get more

help in Iraq.

Sure, we would like to get more countries on board with us, but this

is tough business and it takes bold, visionary leadership--like we see

in Great Britain, Italy, Poland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia,

and dozens of our closest allies. To imply, as some of my colleagues

have, that the United States is not getting help from our international

friends is simply untrue. As terrorism spreads to other countries, as

it did recently in Russia, we should expect--and provide--even more

help.

And let me point out the obvious about some allies, like France, who

have not been supportive of our policies in Iraq. Their foreign policy

decisions are based on internal political considerations and not on the

personality of the President of the United States. For some of my

colleagues to imply that some countries will change their policies

toward Iraq if we change our President is ludicrous and misleading. The

French will change their foreign policy when they change their

President, not when we change ours. I have a great deal of trust and

confidence in the common sense of the American people and I am sure

they will understand exactly what I am saying.

The junior Senator from Massachusetts has also called for better

training for Iraqi security forces. I am glad that he also agrees with

President Bush on this point. Training Iraqi security forces is a high

priority of this administration.

Let us look at the facts. The Iraqi Army has more than 62,000

members. Of these, almost 46,000 have been trained and another 16,000

are currently in training. All 27 battalions of the Iraqi Army will be

operational by January 2005.

Speaking at New York University recently, the Democratic Presidential

candidate said, ``Of the 35,000 police now in uniform, not one, not

one, has completed a 24-week field training program.'' Just yesterday,

however, The Washington Post reported that the head of strategic plans

and policy for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Lt. Gen. Walter Sharp, said

that Kerry's accusation was just not accurate. According to Gen. Sharp,

who is in a position to know, basic training for new Iraqi police

officers is eight weeks, followed by 26 weeks of ``on-the-job'' field

training. The Post article went on to say that Gen. Casey, the top U.S.

commander in Iraq, estimates that Iraqi security forces will be in

`local control' of the majority of Iraq by the end of December, which

is just 3 months away. Gen. Casey defined `local control' as a

combination of having Iraqi security forces in place, plus an

assessment of the ability of local political leaders to govern

and to manage economic reconstruction efforts.

Others have criticized the President for not getting NATO involved in

Iraq. Too bad they didn't read yesterday's London Financial Times. If

they had, they would have read that, ``NATO is close to a deal to

establish a military training academy in Iraq. The academy, which would

have a staff of about 300, is intended to give substance to a decision

by a NATO summit in June to provide training to the war-torn country as

it seeks to build up its institutions.'' I hasten to add, that this

NATO initiative was put forward by our President. So getting NATO

involved is another area where the Democratic Presidential candidate

agrees with the administration's policy in Iraq. Let me also add that

15 of 26 NATO member states are sharing the military burden on the

ground with us in Iraq.

Charles Colton's famous quotation, ``Imitation is the sincerest of

flattery,'' certainly applies to my colleague, Mr. Kerry. His four-

point plan is not new and it certainly is not original. A careful

review of President Bush's policies in Iraq clearly shows that the

administration has been implementing all the points addressed by

Senator Kerry well before he even articulated them.

We need to judge the President's policy in Iraq, not by the rhetoric

of his detractors, but by those who know the facts. Tomorrow, the

Congress will welcome, in Joint-Session, the interim Prime Minister of

Iraq, Dr. Allawi. Let us hear from him how things are going in Iraq.

Let us listen to him to find out what the Iraqi people think of our

policies and programs for restoring security and getting the Iraqi

economy going.

Let me close by quoting from President Bush's speech, which he gave

at the UN yesterday. I believe it clearly shows why we are in Iraq,

something that others do not seem to grasp. The President said:

He went on to say:

The Acting Secretary of the Army, Les Brownlee, has eloquently framed

why Iraq is important in the war on terrorism when he said:

Thank you Mr. President.