Madam President, I want to talk a little bit about the

war in Iraq and what I consider to be a larger problem confronting this

Nation, indeed, confronting the American people, particularly during an

election year. It is really a challenge we all have, and that is how,

in a country that is founded on the legitimacy of our laws, being

founded on consent of the governed, how do the people know what is

happening, not just in their Government but in the world? How do they

get good information?

I will give an example. Two nights ago, I received a call from one of

my constituents in Lubbock, TX, who said he had heard we were going to

reinstate the draft because of concerns about Iraq and Afghanistan and

American forces being spread too thin. Of course, I told him we have

more than 2.5 million men and women in uniform, including our Active

Duty, our Reserves, and our National Guard. I said the phrase I have

come to use often, and that is that we are out of balance, but we are

not out of troops.

Secretary Rumsfeld yesterday spoke before the Armed Services

Committee--the distinguished Presiding Officer, of course, is a member

of that committee and heard those remarks as well--that we are in the

process of restructuring our military forces so we can access more of

those forces, so we can put those troops where they need to be. That is

a process that is part of the global posture review and certainly the

Base Realignment and Closure Commission process that goes forward next

year, all of which falls under the heading of transformation.

Getting back to the question my constituent asked--which is, I am

worried because I hear that we may reinstate the draft--I asked

Secretary Rumsfeld that very question. Indeed, I alluded to a statement

that had been made the day before by the Democratic Presidential

nominee where it was said that it was possible that the President would

reinstate the draft to handle the war in Iraq if President Bush was

reelected. This statement followed on a charge last week that the

President was planning a surprise postelection callup of additional

Guard and Reserve troops.

I asked the Secretary of Defense, Secretary Rumsfeld, for the record:

Are there any plans for a postelection callup of additional Guard and

Reserve troops, and is there any truth to this rumor that the President

plans to reinstate the draft?

He gave a very spirited response, but the bottom line is he said:

That is nonsense. It is not true. It is false.

I guess if he could find other ways to try to get that message

through, he would do that. I cannot remember if it was Mark Twain who

said rumor makes it halfway around the world while the truth is still

putting on its shoes, or something to that effect. It is in that vein

that I come to the floor of the Senate to talk about Iraq.

Let me start by sharing the results of a recent nationwide poll of

the Iraqi people conducted by the Independent Institute for

Administrative and Civil Society Studies. I refer to this poll because,

of course, like the distinguished Presiding Officer, I am sure she has

experienced troops who have been in Iraq and come back to the United

States, who read the newspaper accounts, watch TV news, and do not

recognize what they are seeing and reading because, indeed, the troops

in Iraq, in addition to being everyday heroes, are well disciplined,

morale is high, and they know they are doing an important job and they

are getting the job done. But they come back to the States, read a

newspaper and watch the news, and they are met with gloom and doom and

pessimism about our prospects.

I worry--and I expressed this concern yesterday--that particularly in

an election season, those of us who are in elected office need to be

very careful and very responsible about our statements, even when we

are in the heat of political combat, because we do not want to do

anything that would have the consequence of demoralizing our troops or

breaking the resolve of the American people as we fight this global war

on terror.

But this poll of the Iraqi people I believe is important because it

consisted of more than 2,300 household interviews and was distributed

across Iraq's 18 provinces. Here are just a few of the interesting

statistics this survey reveals:

A full 75 percent of the Iraqis expressed hopefulness about the

future of the nation, and more than 70 percent say they would not leave

their country even if they were given an opportunity to live elsewhere.

While earlier polls show the Iraqis were concerned with security, and

that is obvious to all of us that they would be and should be, as we

are, the Iraqi police and army are gaining the confidence of the Iraqi

people to deal with their transition from a terrible, bloodthirsty

dictator under Saddam Hussein

to now this interim government leading up to full democratic elections

in late January. More than two-thirds of the respondents expressed

trust for the Iraqi men and women trying to bring about peace and

stability and security--that is, the growing Iraqi Army and security

forces--and, in fact, as the distinguished Presiding Officer knows, the

single largest component of the coalition efforts in Iraq now are

Iraqis. More than 238,000 Iraqis serve as part of that country's

security force as we speak. As we have heard from Secretary Rumsfeld

and others, that will continue to grow.

General David Petraeus is assigned the job of making sure they are

trained. As we train more recruits to become good security forces in

Iraq, it will decrease the pressure on America to provide those

security forces and others of our coalition partners. That is good news

to me and I am sure good news to people all across this country.

This same survey revealed that the interim government of Iraq is

trusted by 65 percent of its citizens.

I wish all of us in elected office could claim those sorts of

approval ratings in the United States, but I will not go there. The

Iraqi courts and judges, the most important component of restoring

respect for the rule of law in Iraq, are trusted by more than 64

percent of Iraqis responding to this survey of 2,300 households. More

than 77 percent of those polled believe that holding regular, fair

elections is the most important political right for the Iraqi people.

I will talk more to that in a moment, because I am afraid there are

some who do not believe that the people of the Middle East are capable

of democracy and doubt their aspirations for liberty. But 77 percent of

those polled believe that holding regular, fair elections is the most

important political right for the Iraqi people.

Finally, 58 percent of those polled believe that democracy in Iraq is

likely to succeed. That is a far cry from the doom and gloom preached

by some of the naysayers in this election season and, indeed, some of

what we see on our televisions and read in our newspapers.

Yesterday, in a joint session of Congress, I had the honor to hear

interim Prime Minister Allawi speak. He started out his remarks, after

a few moments, with these words: Thank you, America. Thank you,

America, for delivering the Iraqi people from a terrible dictator and

tyrant in Saddam Hussein.

He went on to express his appreciation not only for the sacrifices of

the men and women in uniform but to all of the people of this great

country who hold the ideal of liberty, freedom, and opportunity as not

just an American aspiration but something that everyone, every human

being, aspires to.

I will quote from his remarks because they go to the heart of the

pessimism that is expressed in some quarters about the Middle East and

what is happening in Iraq. He said:

I will read that again because it is so important. Prime Minister

Allawi said:

He goes on to say:

Finally, the Prime Minister said:

I believe that lengthy quote is worth hearing again because I also

want to talk a minute about the nature of the threat we confront and

that Prime Minister Allawi spoke of, not just a war confined to Iraq

but indeed a global war on terrorism.

It was 3 years ago this month that we were forced to realize as a

nation that the terrorist foe we had been fighting on the margin for

years sought a more deadly goal than we ever suspected. The terrorist

threat we battle today does not just seek victory over America; it

seeks an extermination of our unity, our culture, our liberty,

everything that makes America the envy of the free world today.

I think of recent expressions I have read. The 9/11 Commission did a

very good job of expressing the nature of the threat Prime Minister

Allawi spoke of and that we confront today. Under its recommendations,

the 9/11 Commission said:

Skipping down a paragraph, they conclude from this reading:

We have seen--and it is not a matter of taking my word for it or even

the 9/11 Commission's word for it or Prime Minister Allawi's word for

it--that the war we are fighting is not confined to Iraq. It is not

confined to Afghanistan. In fact, I think those who suggest otherwise

are ignoring the lessons of history, as well as the sage words of the

9/11 Commission, the Prime Minister, and others.

We have seen the evil works of this terrorist wave, and not just on

9/11. We saw the attack on the USS Cole in 2000, an attack that killed

17 American sailors and wounded 39. We saw the bombing in Bali in

Indonesia 2 years ago. We see, it seems like with horrible regularity,

Palestinian suicide attacks in Israel, and the United Nations compound

car bomb attack in Iraq.

This year alone we have seen massacres in Madrid, the Twin Tupolev

bombings in Russia, and the suicide car bomb attacks in Afghanistan and

Iraq. Most recently, we have seen the butchery by terrorists who

murdered children in the schoolyards of Beslan.

No, the war on terror is not limited to Iraq. It is not limited to

Afghanistan. They are but fronts in the global war we are waging today.

In fact, it was the combatant commander, the Central Command General

John Abizaid, who only a couple of months ago admonished all of us in

the Senate not to look at the war as though looking through a soda

straw, not to look at what is happening in Afghanistan and at what is

happening in Iraq and say this is all there is, this is reality.

Indeed, some have even suggested that the war in Iraq is a diversion

from the real war on terror. But, of course, that is flying in the face

of the facts: the long litany of terrorist attacks in many different

parts of the world, the presence of Al Qaeda forces and allies in Iraq,

and, of course, what Prime Minister Allawi has said as well.

Indeed, during this political season when international affairs and

the war on terror is a prime topic in political debates and

discussions, there appears to be an attempt to decouple Iraq from the

global war on terrorism, to suggest that it is a distraction. But I

hope I have convinced those within the sound of my voice that cannot be

true; that is not true. Indeed, I believe that argument is a disservice

to the American people and our forces in the field, whose resolve must

remain strong as we continue to fight this great scourge on humanity.

Under President Bush's leadership, despite the naysayers who claim

this task could not be done, we have confronted this evil for what it

is. We have employed the very best weapon America has to offer: the

power of our ideals and the power of liberty. Even as we battle them

around the world, the terrorists have flocked to specific points to

battle us. As coalition forces liberated Iraq and Afghanistan, they

have been attracted to Iraq and Afghanistan like moths to the flame.

Why? Because they realize that their dark ideology of hate will not--

cannot--survive the spreading light of freedom.

The spread of democracy, the new foundation of the rule of law, and

the creation of fledgling representative governments that honor and

respect human rights--together these actions spell out the increasing

marginalization of the terrorists, as they have fewer and fewer places

to run and hide. Ultimately, they herald the end of terrorism as we

know it.

Of course, none of us asked for this task. We cannot erase 9/11, as

much as our hearts desire it. We cannot change the past. But we must

acknowledge that this responsibility has fallen to us--in this time, in

this generation--and we must and we will win by fighting this enemy

where they plot and plan, so we do not have to fight them on American

soil.

I want to reiterate: We must always remain conscious in this body as

elected officials, as representatives of our States and of this great

Nation--we must always be conscious of the fact that the words we say,

particularly during an election season, can have a broad and negative

effect on the morale of our soldiers in the field. We must continue to

give our forces all the support they need and stay focused on our goal.

And while our enemies began this fight on their terms, we will finish

it on ours.

We will widen the span of the democratic peace into places where the

enemy trains and recruits. We will liberate the people held under the

yoke of darkness and despotism for generations. And around the world we

will hear the rumble of millions of people waking to discover that yes,

at long last, they are free.

Madam President, the terrorists have heard a great noise in Iraq--and

it is the sound of their doom.

I yield the floor.