Mr. President, I thank the leader and the leadership. I

know the matters we have before us are of great importance and urgency.

So is the matter about which I will address the Senate.

By any reasonable standard, our policy in Iraq is failing. We are

steadily losing ground in the war. Even after

9/11, it was wrong for this President or any President to shoot first

and ask questions later, to rush to war and ignore or even muzzle

serious doubts by experienced military officers and experienced

officials in the State Department and the CIA about the rationale and

justification for the war, and the strategy for waging it.

We all know that Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator. We have known

it for more than 20 years. We are proud, very proud, of our troops for

their extraordinary and swift success in removing Saddam from power.

But as we also now know beyond doubt, Saddam did not pose the kind of

immediate threat to our national security that could possibly justify a

unilateral, preventive war without the broad support of the

international community. There was no reason whatsoever to go to war

when we did, in the way we did, and for the false reasons we were

given.

The administration's insistence that Saddam could provide nuclear

material or even nuclear weapons to al-Qaida has been exposed as an

empty threat. It should have never been used by President Bush to

justify an ideological war that America never should have fought.

Saddam had no nuclear weapons. In fact, not only were there no

nuclear weapons, there were no chemical or biological weapons either,

no weapons of mass destruction of any kind.

Nor was there any persuasive link between al-Qaida and Saddam and the

9/11 attacks. A 9/11 Commission Staff Statement put it plainly:

The 9/11 Commission Report stated clearly that there was no

``operational'' connection between Saddam and al-Qaida.

Secretary of State Colin Powell now agrees that there was no

correlation between 9/11 and Saddam's regime. So does Secretary of

Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Nevertheless, President Bush continues to

cling to the fiction that there was a relationship between Saddam and

al-Qaida. As the President said in his familiar Bush-speak, ``The

reason that I keep insisting that there was a relationship between Iraq

and Saddam and al-Qaida is because there was a relationship between

Iraq and al-Qaida.''

That's the same logic President Bush keeps using today in his

repeated stubborn insistence that the situation is improving in Iraq,

and that we and the world are safer because Saddam is gone.

The President and his administration continue to paint a rosy picture

of progress in Iraq. Just last Wednesday, he referred to the growing

insurgency as ``a handful of people.'' Some handful.

Vice President Cheney says we're ``moving in the right direction,''

despite the worsening violence. Our troops are increasingly the targets

of deadly attacks. American citizens are being kidnapped and brutally

beheaded.

But Secretary Rumsfeld says he's ``encouraged'' by developments in

Iraq.

Our colleague Senator Lindsey Graham doesn't buy that, and he has

said so clearly: ``We do not need to paint a rosy scenario for the

American people.''

Neither does our colleague Senator Hagel, a Vietnam veteran and a

member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As he stated

unequivocally last week, ``I don't think we're winning . . . The fact

is, we're in trouble. We're in deep trouble in Iraq.''

The National Intelligence Estimate in July, although not yet made

public, made this point as well--and made it with such breathtaking

clarity that for the good of our country, officials leaked it to the

press. The New York Times said the estimate ``spells out a dark

assessment of prospects for Iraq.'' The same Times report and other

reports, the National Intelligence Estimate outlines three different

possibilities for Iraq through the end of next year. The worst-case

scenario is that Iraq plunges into outright civil war. The best-case

scenario--the best case--is that violence in Iraq continues at current

levels, with tenuous political and economic stability.

President Bush categorically rejected that analysis, saying the CIA

was ``just guessing.'' Last week, he retreated somewhat. He said he

should have used ``estimate'' instead of ``guess.''

In other words, the best case scenario between now and the end of

2005 is that our soldiers will be bogged down in a continuing quagmire

with no end in sight. President Bush refused to give the time of day to

advice like that by the best intelligence analysts in his

administration, but the American people need to hear it.

We learned in yesterday's New York Times that the President was also

warned by intelligence officials before the war that the invasion could

increase support for political Islam and result in a deeply divided

society in Iraq, a society prone to violent internal conflict. Before

the war, President Bush received a report that warned of the possible

insurgency.

It is listed on the front page of the New York Times. Just to mention

part of the story:

That is the warning this President had, but he rushed headlong into

the war with no plan to win the peace. Now, despite our clear failures,

the President paints a rosy picture. Look at today's national

newspapers. The Washington Post, on the front page, says:

When is the President going to level with the American people?

In the New York Times today--these are in the last 2 days, Mr.

President--on the front page it says: ``Baghdad,'' and this is a

different story:

The outlook is bleak, and it is easy to understand why. It is because

the number of insurgents has gone up. The number of their attacks on

our troops has gone up. The sophistication of the attacks has gone up.

The number of our soldiers killed or wounded has gone up. The number of

hostages seized and even savagely executed has gone up.

Our troops are under increasing fire. More than 1,000 of America's

finest young men and women have been killed. More than 7,000 have been

wounded. In August alone, we had 863 American casualties. Our forces

were attacked an average of 70 times a day, higher than for any month

since President Bush dressed up in a flight suit, flew out to the

aircraft carrier, and recklessly declared, ``Mission accomplished'' a

year and a half ago.

The President, the Vice President, the National Security Council,

Secretary Rumsfeld, and other civilian leaders in the Pentagon failed

to see the insurgency that took place last year and that began to

metastasize like a deadly cancer. How could they have not noticed?

Perhaps because they were still celebrating their ``mission

accomplished.''

For 2 years, terrorist cells in Iraq have been spreading like cancer.

Any doctor who would let that happen to a patient would be guilty of

malpractice.

In many places in Iraq today, it is too dangerous to go out even with

guards. The streets are so dangerous that some parents are apparently

keeping their children home from school, afraid they will be kidnapped,

or worse, along the way.

The State Department does not attempt to conceal the truth about the

danger, at least in its travel warnings. Its September 17 advisory

states that Iraq remains very dangerous.

At the end of August, a bloody 3-week battle in Najaf ended with an

agreement that U.S. troops would give up the city. Fallujah and now

other cities are no-go zones for our troops, presumably to avoid even

greater casualties, until after the election.

Those are not the only areas where we have lost control. Last Friday,

Secretary Powell said:

We continue to use so-called precision bombing in Iraq, even though

our bombs cannot tell whether it is terrorists or innocent families

inside the buildings they destroy.

What is helping to unite so many Iraqi people in hatred of America is

this emerging sense that America is unwilling, not just unable, to

rebuild their shattered country and provide for their basic needs. Far

from sharing President Bush's unrealistic rosy view, they see close up

that their hopes for peace and stability are receding every day.

Inevitably, more and more Iraqis believe that attacks on American

forces are acceptable, even if they would not resort to violence

themselves. For every mistake we make, for every innocent Iraqi child

we accidentally kill in another bombing raid, the ranks of the

insurgents climb, and so does their fanatical determination to stop at

nothing to drive us out.

An Army reservist described the deteriorating situation this way:

The Iraqi people's anger is also fueled by the persistent blackouts,

the power shortages, the lack of electricity, the destroyed

infrastructure, the relentless violence, the massive lack of jobs and

basic necessities and services.

By any reasonable standard, our policy is failing in Iraq. The

President should level with the American people. He should take off his

rose-colored glasses, understand the truth, and tell the truth. The

American people and our soldiers in Iraq deserve answers to the

questions they have about the war: Will President Bush come to the

Presidential debate tomorrow prepared to answer the hard questions?

Will he admit that we are on a catastrophic path in Iraq? Will he admit

that we rushed to a $200 billion war with no plan to win the peace?

Will he offer a concrete plan to correct our course?

We are steadily losing ground in the war. No amount of campaign spin

can obscure those facts. We have to do better. November 2 is our

chance. This President had his chance in Iraq. We deserve a new call,

and I believe we will have it on November 2.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.