Mr. President, I want to express my appreciation for

Senator Craig's comments. I think they are so appropriate as we

approach Veterans Day tomorrow, November 11. As he said, it is

important that we give gratitude to these soldiers. But it is also very

important--maybe even more important--that this Senate and this

Congress give our support to them, we back them up, we affirm them in

the courageous service they are giving and not undermine what they are

doing by thoughtless and unfair criticisms. That is what is on my heart

today and I

want to talk about it a little bit. I think it goes to the core of our

integrity and our personal self-discipline as Senators.

I have to say, with great respect, that politics on too many

occasions has overridden our commitment in this Senate to the soldiers

who serve on the battlefield. We are a free and open society. We value

and protect free and public debate in our country, and in the Senate

one has the freedom to say or write almost anything he or she desires,

whether wise or foolish. To secure and maintain that freedom and our

other freedoms, on many occasions we have sent our soldiers to battle

hostile forces around the globe.

Over 1 million personnel have died in combat to preserve the freedoms

and liberties we take for granted today. Young soldiers, volunteers,

and draftees have been called over the years to defend the values and

liberties our Nation cherishes. As Senators, we are a key part of the

process by which this Nation authorizes hostilities and calls them up.

If there is any maturity of judgment in us at all, we understand that

such a decision, when we make it, is a grave one and we know the lives

of our military personnel will be placed at risk when we send them out.

History and common sense tells us so. Any Senator not understanding

this is not fit for the office they hold.

It is my view that there is and are no glorious wars. All war is bad.

The Lord did not want His children to fight. But I am resigned to the

fact that, throughout history, human efforts to maintain peace at any

price have failed and that the option of war at certain times becomes

better than the alternatives.

Let me speak frankly about the war on terrorism. We in this Senate

are not children led about like the Pied Piper of Hamelin by President

Bush or Vice President Cheney. We are not and were not ignorant

concerning the situation we found ourselves in after 9/11. We cheered

President Bush's strong and determined response to terrorism at that

time, and even when he warned us it would be a long, protracted, and

bitter struggle, which he said repeatedly, the Senate promptly

authorized the attack on the Taliban, who oppressed their own people in

Afghanistan and who harbored and provided training for al-Qaida and

Osama bin Laden. This Senate supported the President's demand on Mullah

Omar that the Taliban cease these training bases and turn over bin

Laden or face military action. We supported that. And when Mullah Omar

and his oppressors refused, the Senate supported military action

against the Taliban. When the war went so well, virtually everyone was

pleased and said it was a good and proper thing we had done.

We are proud of what is happening in Afghanistan today. We have

soldiers there, as Senator Craig said, working directly with the people

of Afghanistan to try to lift them up and give them a period of

sunshine and peace, after decades of war. These good results happened,

however, not because we voted to authorize force but because this

Nation was able to call on great soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines

to go into harm's way, facing what they had to know would be great

danger, to execute the policy we voted for and that the President was

authorized to execute.

The military action in Afghanistan went well. But make no mistake, we

Senators knew the mission was dangerous and most predicted far more

casualties than occurred in that effort. The credit goes to our

military's brilliant tactics.

At this same time, Iraq was continuing its systematic, illegal, and

unconscionable actions against its own people, against the United

States, and against the United Nations--continuing violation of 16 U.N.

resolutions. These resolutions in essence were a result of Iraq's plea

for peace after the coalition forces ejected it from the nation of

Kuwait. Surely this Nation has not forgotten that. Surely this Senate

has not forgotten that. Surely we remember that Saddam's Iraq had, by

surprise and brutality, attacked and occupied its peaceful neighbor

Kuwait. At that time, with the United States in the lead, the coalition

demanded that Saddam withdraw or face military force.

In 1991, he refused and, in a brilliant strike, our forces, under the

command of General Norman Schwarzkopf, forcibly ejected Saddam's

military from Kuwait and liberated that nation. Then Kuwait's was a

responsible voice on the world scene, as it is today.

To stop the coalition forces from moving to Baghdad to remove him

from office, Saddam made a series of agreements under the supervision

of the United Nations. He did not keep them, of course. First he

declared he had not lost the war but was in fact the victor. Such a

statement was a clear indication of his plans to continue his drive to

dominate that region and to lead a fight against the west. When a U.N.

plan was developed to allow the sale of Iraq's oil so food could be

made available to the Iraqi people, he cheated on the Oil for Food

Program to rebuild his military and his personal palaces, leaving

millions of his own people hungry.

He attacked his own people, brutally repressing the Shiites in the

south and the Kurds in the north. He had earlier used poison gas, a

weapon of mass destruction, against his own people, the Kurds. He

effectively ejected U.N. inspectors and refused to provide assurance

that he was not creating or was not in possession of weapons of mass

destruction. He had previously promised not to possess or develop these

weapons. He fired missiles regularly at American and British aircraft

as they sought to enforce the no-fly zones to protect the Kurds and the

Shiites from oppression.

In response, President Clinton and President Bush authorized hundreds

of military responses against Iraq, dropping bombs on military

positions and carrying out missile strikes. Surely we have not

forgotten--we were in a state of hot hostility with Iraq, leading up to

our decision to remove him from power.

The megalomania of Saddam, and his brutality, presented the decent

nations of the world with a direct challenge. With the growth of

terrorism that had culminated in the 9/11 attacks, and which threatened

the peaceful world, it became clear that the reconstituting of Saddam's

forces in violation of the United Nations could not be allowed to

continue. Once again, our Nation led a huge international coalition to

demand that he comply with the U.N. resolutions. The vote in this

Senate to authorize that and to insist that he comply and use force if

he refused to do so was 78 to 22, with a clear majority of our

Democratic Senators in support to authorize military force with or

without U.N. approval if Saddam refused to comply with these

resolutions.

Our decision was not taken lightly or in haste. The issue had been

openly discussed for months. The Senate debate was full and free. Most

felt there was no other option.

I remember the Economist magazine of London said the embargo was

failing. We either give up or fight. They concluded in their editorial:

Our choice is to fight. The British Government reached the same

conclusion, as did many others.

Of course, our vote was consistent with the 1999 resolution of this

Senate signed by President Clinton to make it the official policy of

our Government to effect a regime change in Iraq, so bad had Saddam's

actions become even at that time. Still, there was no rush to war.

President Bush powerfully made his case abroad and at the U.N.

Countless efforts were undertaken to bring Saddam into compliance, but

they all failed. The demands on Saddam became more and more direct, the

warnings more and more explicit, and his utter refusal to comply with

the agreements on weapons inspections and other U.N. resolutions became

more and more obvious. He had made up his mind. The stark reality

became clear. He would not ever voluntarily comply.

He thought he could break the coalition, that we would not invade,

that he could continue on with his fantasy that Iraq, under his

leadership, would dominate this whole region of the world. Please

remember, the Senate vote consisted not just of a majority of the

Democratic Members but it included the Democratic Party's Presidential

candidate, its Vice Presidential candidate, its leader, its former Vice

Presidential candidate, and then and current leaders. The decision was

a bipartisan decision. Only then did we send our finest soldiers into

harm's way--a bipartisan decision, after extensive debate by this body.

Our soldiers, as a result of this process, were then directed to

engage and

defeat one of the world's largest armies, to effect a regime change in

Iraq. The men and women of our military heard their Nation's call, as

they have for so many years. They responded with professionalism,

courage, and determination. The challenge was great. The initial

hostilities and military actions went exceedingly well, but it was very

dangerous and there were important threats that they faced throughout

that effort. Saddam's forces were vast, but they collapsed relatively

quickly in the face of our aggressive forces executing General Frank's

superb battle plan. While the effort was fraught with dangers, as our

media told us every night, and indeed there was considerable tough

fighting, our soldiers were again magnificent. We all rejoiced to see

the Iraqi celebrations break out.

Some said, What happened to the celebrations? They were there. We saw

them on TV, to see the fall of the statue of Saddam. The coalition then

set about to help this exhausted nation, brutalized by decades of

oppression, rebuild itself with freedom and prosperity.

While the initial military conflict went better than we could have

hoped, our vision for a prosperous and democratic Iraq is still on

track. But it definitely has presented more difficulties than most of

us anticipated. It has been hard. It has been difficult. Suicide

bombers persist in their hateful bombings. Terrorists are still active

against our forces and the people in Iraq, attacking their own people.

Still, despite the violence, initial elections were completed with blue

fingers held high and a separate election ratified the Constitution.

Now the first democratic elections are set for December and are on

track.

Vicious, terroristic suicide bombers remain. While they will be able

to inflict suffering and fear on the people of Iraq and death on our

soldiers, their efforts are and must be doomed. The terrorists offer no

hope, no plan, no vision. They simply desire, like Saddam, to seize

power and run Iraq for their own purposes, to control the reins of

power for their own radical and twisted purposes.

But, our military personnel, soldiers, marines, sailors, and airmen,

all one force, have performed magnificently. I have been to Iraq three

times, and visited with active, Guard and Reserve units. I talked to

the soldiers and we are so proud of them. They have not whined or

advocated retreat. They want the war to be successful. Every day they

go out on patrol placing their lives on the line to carry out the

policies and directions we, the Senate, the House of Representatives,

and the President gave them. Our soldiers know their civics. They are

placing their lives on the line for America. Because in this Republic,

the proper governmental authorities of the people have spoken.

Consistently, they tell me, their parents, and their friends that

they believe in what they are doing. They know the Iraqi people want a

better life. They, by countless acts of kindness and courtesy, amid the

violence and strain of war, work to create good will, to explain

democracy, and promote harmony. They want to help the Iraqi people to

have a better life, and then, then they want to come home.

You bet they want to come home. But they truly desire that our noble

goal, their mission for a better Iraq, be realized.

Who, more than our soldiers, knows the dangers from hidden and sneak

attacks? Who knows the reality on the ground better than they?

Certainly not the television networks constantly focusing on violence

and contention who drop in and bug out.

But, colleagues, the greatest concern our soldiers have is that this

Senate, our Congress, will lose its nerve and pull back before the job

is done. You see, losing our nerve will undermine what they have

accomplished by blood and sweat.

While remarkably steadfast and determined, they do not like what they

see and hear from Congress or the media. Their successes ignored, the

problems exaggerated. Their errors are highlighted. I am particularly

concerned that our Senate debate in recent months has become infected

by personal animosity and political venom. The rhetoric coming out of

Congress is astounding. It was somewhat understandable last year, when

we were in a Presidential election campaign, that the political

language would be overheated. But, now, after the American people have

affirmed President Bush's leadership by reelecting him with the first

majority vote for President in many years, there seems to be a blind

force driving some of my Democrat colleagues to prove their votes for

military force in Iraq were wrong, and that our election was not an

affirmation of our Nation's bipartisan Iraqi policy, but that this

policy was a result of ``lies.'' What false and damaging rhetoric this

is. I urge my colleagues to remember that the world, our enemies, and

our soldiers fighting for our policies are listening. While there were

intelligence failures, our leaders did not lie us into war. We Senators

heard the same intelligence estimates and we voted to authorize war.

The truth is this: We all heard the intelligence and we authorized

those hostilities. Some of the intelligence was wrong, but it was not

wrong that an unleashed Saddam, freed from his box, would again become

a dangerous threat to world peace. That is a true fact. That is a

strategic issue we faced. As we wrestle over the intelligence failures

that occurred, we must not overreact. This Senate should never parrot

the false charges of our enemies. If we make errors, confront them

honestly and fix them. But undermining our Nation's position in the

world, encouraging the enemy to falsely believe the U.S. is divided,

and leading the enemy to believe that we may quit if they can just kill

a few more American soldiers or marines is wrong, wrong, wrong.

Political animosity in some cases seems to have so infected our

rhetoric that criticism has become not constructive but destructive.

So my plea to my colleagues is insistent. Please remember that the

world hears what we say here. Please remember that exaggerated

political charges can do more than sting officials at home. The world

hears what is said, and many believe what is being said.

This war was not based on a lie. I have explained how we came to our

final vote. The issue of the existence of weapons of mass destruction

in Iraq was important, but it was the strategic recognition that an

unrepentant and triumphant Saddam, unloosed from the U.N. embargo and

in acting violation of 16 U.N. resolutions, was the fundamental threat

to us and to the world. And we certainly all knew that weapons of mass

destruction would surely be his easiest tool for international

intimidation.

The United Nations' final report when they exited the country

concluded that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction and virtually all

intelligence agencies in the world, including the French that certainly

were not under, our control agreed. The Intelligence Committee report,

phase I, unanimously passed 17 to 0, concluded, however, that the

intelligence given to the President and Congress was wrong in part. The

report specifically concluded that President Bush was not lying to the

American people. And, importantly, the report concluded that the

intelligence community was not pressured to alter or shape their views

to please the President or anyone else.

Another major report, the Robb-Silberman Report--Senator Robb, a

former Democratic Member of this body, was cochairman--on weapons of

mass destruction, was clear. They found ``no evidence of political

pressure to influence the Intelligence Community's pre-war assessments

of Iraq's weapons programs . . . analysts universally asserted that in

no instance did political pressure cause them to skew or alter any of

their analytical judgements. We conclude that it was the paucity of

intelligence and poor analytical tradecraft, rather than political

pressure, that produced the inaccurate pre-war intelligence

assessments.''

So why do our colleagues continue to promote what I believe are

falsehoods? Why call the President and the Vice President liars? Why

accuse them of sending soldiers to death based on some secret agenda?

We debated it openly here for months. For the life of me, I can't

understand it. We all--all of us--know the facts today; we knew the

situation then; we know the score. There was no mystery when we voted

to authorize military force, nor is there mystery now. The going,

though, is tough in Iraq now. The need, therefore, is even greater for

us to all work

together to meet the challenge and successfully conclude our policies

to create a better, positive, democratic, and prosperous future for

Iraq. We must pull together and focus on the goal we endorsed when the

war started.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.