Mr. President, last week the G8 summit was held in my

State of Georgia, and I had the honor of serving as one of the hosts,

along with our Governor, the senior Senator from Georgia, Congressman

Kingston, and Congressman Burns in greeting the other seven members of

the G8. Together with President George W. Bush, we received the heads

of state and government from Britain, Canada, Germany, France, Italy,

Japan, and Russia, along with a number of other leaders of countries

from the Middle East who were specially invited to the G8 summit,

including the new President of Iraq, Ghazi al-Yawer.

I liked what I saw in the new President of Iraq. When I shook his

hand, I shook the hand of a true Iraqi patriot who is determined to see

his country become secure, stable, prosperous, and free. He insists on

full sovereignty for the Iraqi people, and he is already an eloquent

and tough defender of their interests.

This is why he has publicly stated, not once or twice but at almost

every opportunity he gets, that the Iraqi people are grateful for

America's sacrifice in freeing them from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein.

He also made it absolutely clear that his new government will

continue to need the help of America and other coalition forces as it

regains its strength and fends off efforts by terrorists, thugs, and

foreign enemies to strangle Iraq's democracy in its cradle.

President al-Yawer has a vision for Iraq, a nation with a history

stretching back beyond the storied walls of Babylon to the mists of

prehistory. He sees his nation gaining a position of leadership in the

Middle East and forming an example of democracy, peace, progress, and

prosperity for the entire region.

He made it clear to me that Iraq very much sees the United States,

the United Kingdom, and the other nations in the coalition as partners

and friends that took risks to free his nation from the tyranny of

Saddam Hussein and are now working together to help rebuild Iraq.

President al-Yawer is a strong pragmatic leader who wants to put his

government on a sound fiscal footing. When it was proposed to destroy

the Abu Ghraib prison--and I was one, frankly, who advocated that

following the prisoner scandal--and to replace it, he made a poignant

observation about the symbols of Saddam's barbaric treatment of his own

people.

He told ABC's ``This Week'' that Saddam tortured people not just in

prisons but in the basements of each and every government building, and

it would not be prudent to destroy all government entities because of

what happened in them. President al-Yawer said:

This shows a practical approach to governance which is a very welcome

change to the grandiosity and extravagance which, along with cruelty

and aggression, marked the reign of Saddam Hussein.

I know there is not one Senator in this Chamber who would begrudge

Iraq, its people, and President al-Yawer the assistance needed to

continue the transition of Iraq to full sovereignty and democracy.

In my State, we know a real friend stays with you the whole way

through difficult times and does not abandon you when the going gets

tough. You do not lead someone halfway home and then abandon him to the

wolves. And we know those wolves are baying at the door. Al-Qaida, the

Baathists, and all the enemies of democracy are already stepping up

their attacks to drive us from Iraq so they can rip apart this young

democracy.

Only the cowardly, only those without a vision for a newer, better

Middle East would urge us to leave Iraq to its fate. History has left

its inscriptions in Iraq from time immemorial, from cuneiform

inscriptions on clay tablets to the stone pillar of Hammurabai. These

judgments have been read and pondered by men in the centuries following

their inscriptions.

In the distant future, let no traveler see inscribed in weathered

stone the withering judgment of history that the United States had an

opportunity to help democracy take root in the Middle East but failed

to see it through. Let him read instead: They defeated the forces of

darkness so the people of Iraq could live in the light.

The Senate will surely debate what our national policies and

priorities should be as we seek to provide assistance for Iraq. We will

debate the relative merits of the different ways we can help our

friends in Iraq. In fact, this is our job, and it is our duty. But I,

for one, will not entertain any policy option that would allow the

people of Iraq, so recently freed from the horror of despotism, to be

submerged again into the darkness by a different set of tyrants.

Let me now touch on some international aspects of the Iraqi

situation. In addition to the forces from the United States, there are

14 other NATO allies with us in Iraq. Military forces from Bulgaria,

the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia,

Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and the

United Kingdom are all there with us. And we have great support from

another 17 countries, such as Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South

Korea, and the Ukraine. Now the international support helping to secure

the future of Iraq is growing even more.

At the G8 summit, President Bush gained the unanimous support of the

member states to help Iraq. They agreed to form a

to support political, social, and economic reform in

this region. This builds on President Bush's

President Bush also secured a U.N. Security Council resolution

supporting the plan for handing sovereignty back to the Iraqi people.

On June 8, the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1546

which supports free elections and authorizes a multinational security

force to help stabilize the security situation in Iraq.

The U.N. has done exactly the right thing in passing Resolution 1546,

and I applaud them for taking this important step. However, I would be

remiss if I did not mention a subject which hinders the effectiveness

of the United Nations, not only in Iraq but in its dealings around the

world, and by this I mean the Oil-for-Food scandal.

The Oil-for-Food Program, established in 1995, was designed to

alleviate the impact of the economic embargo on the people of Iraq,

while continuing restrictions on military and technology sales. It was

a humanitarian program that was supported by the United States as a way

to help average Iraqi citizens get basic food and medical supplies

while Saddam Hussein was still in power.

The Oil-for-Food Program was administered by the United Nations

Assistant Secretary General Benon V. Sevan who oversaw sales of $111

billion worth of Iraqi oil. While under U.N. auspices, the U.S.

Government Accounting Office estimates that over $10 billion of that

$111 billion was stolen from the Iraqi people by Saddam's regime. While

children were dying for lack of medicine or food, Saddam was importing

Mercedes limousines, weapons, and building his grand palaces. Skimming

off this vast amount of money involved kickbacks and bribes to a wide

variety of foreign officials and businessmen.

When the new Iraqi oil ministry recently published a list of foreign

officials receiving bribes, kickbacks, and

hidden oil allotments from Saddam, U.N. Assistant Secretary Sevan's

name was on a list which included 11 French, 46 Russians, and many

other names. These recipients of Saddam's largess were vocal opponents

of freeing Iraq from Saddam's chokehold and also were bitter critics of

the effects of the embargo on Saddam's regime.

It is ironic that so many of the businessmen and officials who helped

skim off the money designed to buy food and medicine for the Iraqi

people came from countries that complained the loudest about the U.S.-

led effort to oust Saddam from power.

It is imperative that we monitor the U.N. investigation of the Oil-

for-Food scandal to make sure it is thorough and transparent.

Wrongdoers must be prosecuted, not simply bundled off to retirement. To

do any less would greatly compromise the ability of the United Nations

to operate future programs with the confidence of the world community.

Paul Volcker, who was named by Secretary Kofi Annan to head the

investigation into the Oil-for-Food scandal, must receive sufficient

personnel, resources, and access to the relevant documents and U.N.

officials to carry out his responsibility.

A failed investigation will be a bitter indictment of the United

Nations and it would put it on a path that would lead to total--total--

obsolescence and irrelevance. The United Nations can be a unifying

force in the world, and its resolution on the future of Iraq passed

last week is a positive example of this. However, it must also restore

its credibility with the people of Iraq who were robbed of over $10

billion in food and medicine while the Oil for Food Program was being

administered by the U.N.

It is a critical time for both the future of Iraq and the future of

the U.N. In Iraq, it is time to pull together to make it a successful,

stable, and democratic country. At the U.N., it is time to show the

world that it can be a transparent, accountable, and efficient

organization worthy of its noble charter.

We have the unique opportunity to help democracy take root in the

Middle East, and we are fortunate that President Bush, Prime Minister

Blair, and others have the vision and the courage to recognize this and

to do something about it.

Likewise, the United Nations has an opportunity to restore our

confidence in its ability to play a meaningful role on the world stage.

I hope Secretary General Kofi Annan has the necessary courage to carry

his investigation of the Oil for Food scandal to its necessary

conclusion, regardless of how difficult it might be.

Let future generations see that neither the United States, nor the

United Nations, shirked from the challenges that face us today.

Mr. President, the Oil for Food scandal cannot be taken lightly. We

must take this issue seriously to restore credibility to the United

Nations, which is headed down a path of total obsolescence if we do not

act appropriately and if we do not get to the bottom of this particular

and potentially devastating issue.

I yield the floor.