Mr. President, I have a few remarks on leader time that

have to do with a discussion I began on Monday, and that is a follow up

on a trip about 12 days ago to Iraq. Again, we awoke today to increased

terrorist activity in Iraq, with assassination and with sabotage of the

oil supply lines there. I am saddened by the fact we see this terrorist

activity, but I will have

to say, as I said on Monday, this increased terrorist activity was

anticipated. It is unfortunate we have to anticipate this increased

terrorist activity, but it was very clear from our discussions with the

Iraqi leadership, as well as with our civilians and military leadership

in Iraq, that the terrorists' goal is to do everything possible to

obstruct this rule of law, to obstruct this transfer of power, this

transfer to sovereignty, this transfer from us being an occupying force

to a mission.

It is not aimed just at the United States or just the coalition, or

not just the new Iraqi interim government, but it is ultimately aimed--

and this is from the Iraqi leadership perspective--at the Iraqi people.

The trip we took was with Senator Bennett and Senator Ensign. We did

have the opportunity just a few days after the appointment of the new

Prime Minister to meet with the Prime Minister and have an extended

discussion. The new Prime Minister is Dr. Ayad Allawi. He is a

neurologist by training. He is someone who 3 weeks ago did not

anticipate being the new Prime Minister.

As I said earlier in the week, what we found in our discussions with

our leaders there, but even more importantly with the Iraqi leadership,

is that in spite of this anticipated and actual occurrence of increased

terrorist activity--really since late March, and it will likely extend

until several weeks or maybe longer after passage of sovereignty on

June 30--was a lot of optimism and a lot of confidence in this new

interim government. That optimism was tempered with caution and hope,

but it was also paired with a real determination to succeed. Backing

down in response to these terrorists is simply not an option. That is

what the Iraqis told us, what the new Iraqi interim government told us.

In addition, we were encouraged by the confidence that our civilian

leaders, Ambassador Bremer and his colleagues, have in the new

ministers, or 33 of these new ministers who have been appointed, as

well as the new Iraqi leadership, the Prime Minister, the President,

who was here last week, and with whom the Democratic leadership and our

leadership had an opportunity to meet. It is this interim government to

whom we will be passing sovereignty on June 30. So to hear this

confidence come from people who are on the ground in Iraq, the Iraqi

people, as well as our leaders, again, was very reassuring to us.

Dr. Allawi has been a longstanding opponent of Saddam Hussein's

regime.

He is a man of great character, and he is widely respected throughout

Iraq. He made it very clear to us that he shares our strategic goals--

strategic goals which become a partnership in many ways.

In our meeting with the Prime Minister, he stated very clearly that

we--he spoke in terms of ``we,'' the Iraqi people, the Iraqi government

and the United States and the coalition--must again and again come back

to what we and they are fighting for; that is, freedom and human rights

and the rule of law.

This fight on terrorism is one that he knows will be long. He says it

is now an Iraqi responsibility, and if these acts of terrorism are acts

of terrorism against the Iraqi people and their hope for prosperity and

their livelihood--and he would be saying that again and again as Prime

Minister, and indeed he has done that over the last several days. He

said there are some in Iraq who want to destabilize Iraq, that tyranny

works hand in hand with terrorism. He said Iraq has a responsibility at

this point to confront this evil in the region and the world; that Iraq

needs help but it is Iraq's responsibility.

He was quite clear. The forces aligned against us understand that if

Iraq is successful and succeeds in establishing the rule of law, those

forces are defeated, but if Iraq fails as a state, then terrorism may

be uncontrollable there--but also throughout the Middle East. He told

us that a healthy Iraq will lead to a healthy and more stable Middle

East region.

He also made clear that Iraq cannot succeed without the assistance of

the United States, the international community, and the coalition

forces.

He outlined to us various processes that must be worked in parallel

if Iraq is to succeed in rebuilding the Iraqi institutions that were

hurt, destroyed, and run in the ground by Saddam Hussein. We talked

about the court system, the police force, the transformation of Iraqi

society, and ensuring that political reform leads to Iraqis choosing

their own leaders.

He said these two goals are, No. 1, security, and No. 2, free

elections.

As we all know, this interim government will serve for a period of

about 6 months at which time free elections will take place in January

of next year.

A fourth point he made is to pursue economic development.

Again, he came back to the terrorists--that the terrorist activity

there and the fighting going on there discourages investment in Iraq.

A major goal of the Prime Minister is to build consensus so that in

Iraq a national identity will prevail. Their goal, though, continues to

be hindered by Saddam's policy of divide and rule that Saddam purposely

used to fracture Iraq over decades.

The Prime Minister said we need to help the country in order to move

forward, and to do that we need to put that Iraqi face on security, to

put that Iraqi face on the reconstruction and other efforts to

rehabilitate the country.

He assured us that under the new leadership of the interim Iraqi

government which will occur that it will be the Iraqis who will be

telling the Iraqi story.

The central part of the Prime Minister's policy will be to combat

terrorism.

We very quickly moved into the importance of having a strong judicial

system--a strong rule of law to support the system, as he described it.

He pointed out that Iraq must improve and expedite the training of

police and security forces in the country. He thanked us for providing

tremendous assistance as they rebuild that police and security force.

Iraq needs to take steps with the help of its neighbors to tighten

border controls and stop terrorist trafficking.

The Prime Minister also intends to make clear to the Iraqi people

that the terrorist attacks we are seeing on this infrastructure--such

as the tragedy of the sabotage of the oilfields over the last 24

hours--are attacks on the Iraqi people. He says this again and again--

that terrorism hurts the Iraqi people, and thus it is the

responsibility of the Iraqi people to come back and confront the

terrorists.

As we wrapped up our meeting with the Prime Minister, he very soberly

said that as Iraq moves closer and closer to democracy, the more the

terrorists will attack. Indeed, that is exactly what we are seeing over

the last several weeks since late March, and again will likely continue

for the next several weeks.

He wanted us to understand that he and most Iraqis deeply appreciate

the sacrifices that the United States of America has made for his

country, for freedom, for rule of law, and for that move toward

democracy.

Thus, while the road ahead will be difficult, the Iraqi people we

believe--having just been there--are fortunate to have such a dedicated

public servant with his vision and the will to work toward a free and

democratic Iraq. The Iraqi people have a true leader in Prime Minister

Allawi.