Mr. President, I want to make a brief statement in leader

time on a visit I had last week with the new President of the Iraqi

interim government, Sheik Ghazi al-Yawr. The distinguished minority

leader, the distinguished President pro tempore, and Senators Leahy,

Warner, Lugar, Reid, and Levin all participated in what was a

fascinating luncheon discussion.

Our meeting was a timely one. I traveled about 12 days ago to Baghdad

and had the opportunity to spend time with other leaders in Baghdad. To

be able to host the President here and have a discussion about his

perspective was very useful, very productive.

Two weeks ago, I was in Baghdad with Senators Ensign and Bennett, and

while we were there we had the opportunity to meet with the new Iraqi

Prime Minister, Dr. Ayad al-Alawi. I mentioned our discussions with him

on the Senate floor yesterday morning.

Our meeting this week also came on the heels of the unanimous passage

on Tuesday a week ago of the U.N. Security Council resolution that

governs the transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi people as we move from

occupiers to a mission presence in Iraq.

President al-Yawr at our meeting last week laid out his vision of a

free Iraq. He reminded us that the Iraqi people want a free society

that is governed by a rule of law. A rule of law has become a real goal

of his as he looks over the next 6 months in terms of the operation of

this interim government. The Iraqi people want to do what you would

expect, and that is to be able to raise their children in peace and to

be able to live their lives in peace. That element of security coupled

with preparing for these elections 6 months from now are his dual

objectives.

The President did point out and underscored the importance of the

date that will occur now in 2 weeks, and that is June 30, which is the

formal transfer of sovereignty. He stressed the importance of

maintaining a coalition presence posthandover in order to preserve

security while the new Iraqi police forces are being built and rebuilt,

and the Iraqi Armed Forces are being equipped, appropriately armed, and

trained. He rejected those who commit acts of terror against the Iraqi

people. No Iraqi wants to return to the days when a single individual

ruled that country with fear.

He pledged that Iraq would serve as an example of peace and of

freedom--for Iraq, yes, but even more, or equally important, I should

say, as an example for the entire region.

The Iraqi people look forward to holding democratic elections and to

governing themselves, he told us. But he was quick to say the Iraqi

people must have that security in order to rebuild their lives.

It was interesting. When we asked him about the coalition and how

broad a coalition, what he said is what the Iraqi people need is not

just a broad coalition, but he needs--the Iraqi people need--an

effective coalition. It is that effectiveness that ultimately is most

important to him as the new President of that country. He needs people

who can get the job done for him.

The President was quick to express his thanks on behalf of the Iraqi

people and asked us to extend that thanks, that appreciation of the

sacrifices Americans have made so the Iraqi people could live in a free

country, that they would have that opportunity to live freely and to

pursue democracy. He made it clear the full pursuit of democracy will

take time. The first step is the election 6 months from now. It may be

a series of elections before full-blown democracy, as we generally

conceive of democracy, will take hold.

In these difficult times, the President of Iraq stated Iraq would

need the full support of the United States of America, both

politically, financially, and militarily, as they go through this

transition and over the coming months.

He recognized that without a secure and stable environment the U.S.

coalition provided, a democratic Iraq simply would not succeed.

President al-Yawr recognized the huge task confronting the new Iraqi

government, but he was determined. He expressed that determination in

every sentence, in every thought he shared with us. He stated he was

encouraged by the widespread support of the Iraqi people for the new

interim government.

He clearly draws his strength from the aspirations to transform Iraq

into a thriving democracy. President al-Yawr made clear that what is

called TAL, transitional administrative law, the law of the land during

this interim period, would govern their actions in the coming months,

and the rights of all would be protected under this transitional

administrative law. His immediate focus is to build those professional

security forces to establish an independent judiciary that can uphold

that rule of law.

As Iraqis rebuild their capacity to maintain security and govern

themselves, the President said the world would see an Iraqi face on the

war against terrorism in Iraq. Having met the Prime Minister in Baghdad

a week and a half ago, and now the President of Iraq here in the

Nation's Capital, the impact of having that Iraqi face, telling the

Iraqi story, having it not told just by Americans or by an occupying

force, will make a huge difference on the world stage. It is for the

Iraqi people, it is by the Iraqi people, and it is up to the Iraqi

people at this point.

No nation wants to rely on another for its security. The President of

Iraq expressed that. The Iraqi people want to stand on their own

strength. But they need help through this transition period. He also

made it clear that to rely upon a coalition while they are rebuilding

their police and their army is not a surrender of their sovereignty in

any way. Indeed, it is in Iraq's vital national security interests to

accept the coalition's help, he stated.

Having now met with Iraq's two most senior leaders over the last 12

days, I am confident these two leaders and this new government is a

strong one. They have the vision, they have the fortitude, they clearly

have the courage, but they also have the resolve to lead the Iraqi

people on this path toward freedom and democracy.

Indeed, Iraq's new leaders have the confidence of our friends in the

region. Senator Daschle, Senator McConnell, Senator Biden, and I all

met with King Abdullah of Jordan this week in the Capitol. His Majesty

expressed his confidence in and support of the new Iraqi government, as

well. That is, again, a perspective from a very important, very

significant leader in that part of the world.

It is important to praise President Bush and his team for their

vision, for their resolve, and their efforts to get the United Nations

and the international community behind this government. That has been a

successful endeavor.

We are all concerned about the recent terrorist activity in Iraq. As

I have mentioned in the Senate in the last couple of days, an increase

in terrorist activity is anticipated. It is expected by the Iraqi

leaders and by our civilian and military leaders because the terrorist

groups--whether it is the Zarqawi network, whether it is the former

regime loyalists, or whether it is the insurgents--will increase

activity to derail this transition of sovereignty to the new

government. They are not going to be successful. Yet we will see that

increased terrorist activity. Indeed, we see the increased activity

when we open the news each morning.

The terrorists want to disrupt this handoff. They are simply not

going to be successful. They do not want to see the Iraqi people

breathe that fresh air of freedom. They will not be successful. Indeed,

we will win.

I yield the floor.