Mr. President, I rise to discuss my concerns about the

course of our military operations in Iraq.

I returned about 10 days ago from a trip to Iraq with my colleagues.

After a brilliant offensive campaign to destroy the Iraqi military

forces, we have settled into a very dismal and dangerous occupation. In

the last few hours, five more American military personnel were killed

by an improvised explosion device. There were four more civilians who

were killed. Iraqi security forces have died in much higher numbers.

The administration has not responded appropriately to the military

demand within Iraq today. One of the leading points that illustrates

this, I think, irresponsible approach to Iraq is the failure to budget

properly to fund this effort. The operation in Iraq costs approximately

$4 billion a month. Yet in the 2005 budget that was submitted by the

administration, there is no money for operations in Afghanistan or

Iraq. They are still working off the supplemental that was passed last

year. But the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Chief of Staff of the Air

Force, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps testified they are

seriously concerned that on October 1 they will begin to run out of

money. They are already being forced to reprogram funds, to rob Peter

to pay Paul in order to continue this operation.

Having committed ourselves to Iraq, we must prevail, and to prevail,

we must fund all of the requirements for our military. We must do it

adequately and promptly, and the administration is doing neither. We

have a requirement for many pieces of equipment. But probably

emblematic of the difficulties of this operation, the two most pressing

items of equipment are body armor and armored vehicles, principally

uparmored Humvees. When we went into this operation, we did not

understand the consequences of the occupation, the threats to our

troops, the political rivalries in Iraq, the ethnic and sectarian

divisions of the country.

As a result, we found ourselves with troops in the field without

proper equipment. Many lacked body armor, the kind of sophisticated

armor with ceramic insert plates that provide a margin of safety for

our troops. The Army and Department of Defense claimed they fixed it.

But as late as March 26, reports in the San Diego Union, Boston Globe,

and USA Today stated soldiers in Iraq are calling home and asking their

families to buy them body armor and send it to them, or they are buying

it before they deploy. That is unacceptable. That is one example.

With respect to uparmored Humvees, last July I got off of the

aircraft in Baghdad and approached the military policemen from the

118th Military Police Battalion from Rhode Island. The first request I

had was: Get us uparmored Humvees. We are driving through these

dangerous cities and we need that protection.

We have not reached the number of uparmored Humvees we need for

critical troops in Iraq. This might be accomplished by November of this

year, but it is a long time from the need of over a year ago and

finally filling the requirement.

We also have to armor other Humvees, and armor kits have been

provided to do this armoring. Again, the administration's budget is not

sufficient. The Secretary of the Army said: We are going to get all

this equipment done. We are going to run the production line at top

speed.

Yet the money is not there in the budget. We have to do more.

Last September, Senator Hagel and I offered an amendment to the

supplemental to increase the size of the Army by 10,000 troops. This

was vehemently objected to by the Secretary of Defense, but I think

they eventually got the message. A few months ago, the Department of

the Army announced they were going to increase the size by 30,000

troops. But they are not going to ask for the money in the budgetary

process. They are once again going back to the supplemental--to take

money from the supplemental, which already is strapped to pay for

operations. As a result, we will have, I hope, additional forces in the

military,

but we will not have the ordinary budget authority they need to

continue to be funding when we run out of this supplemental.

Those are examples of some of the failures on our part, but they are

failures multiplied with the situation with respect to Iraqi security

forces. Our plan is to transfer, we hope one day, security operations

to the Iraqis. Yet we have not provided sufficient equipment for these

forces.

Senior commanders in Iraq have commented persistently about the lack

of adequate equipment for the security forces, and a March 22 New York

Times article stated:

MG Charles Swannack, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, has

returned from Iraq and his frustrations on this point are extremely

significant. He said, in retrospect, if he knew the equipment was not

coming, he would have used his own resources to buy body armor, radios,

and vehicles for these Iraqi security forces. We are not doing enough

to provide replacement for our own forces, and we are not adequately

funding our present forces in the field.

Those points are examples, I believe, of the failings in terms of

occupation planning and military occupation of Iraq. But there are also

political failures. We are less than 100 days away from transferring

authority to an interim government, and yet no one can tell us what

that interim government will look like. Will it be an increased

governing council with 20, 30, 40 more people? Is it going to be a

three-person presidency with a prime minister? We are 100 days or less

away from that transfer of authority. We have yet to have a nominee to

be the new ambassador to Iraq. Mr. Bremer leaves on June 30, but we

have yet to have a name submitted to us for consideration and

confirmation for someone who will have extraordinary challenges,

extraordinary responsibilities. And yet we are 100 days or less away

from the new ambassador of the United States to Iraq taking his or her

post.

Probably most emblematic, most symbolic of the political difficulties

is the de-Baathiciation program. One of the key problems of this

program is it is being run by Chalabi. Chalabi is an individual in the

Iraqi National Congress who provided most of the misinformation to the

administration as they made their judgments about the imminence of a

threat in Iraq. He has been on our payroll to the tune of about

$300,000 a month funneled through the Iraqi National Congress for many

years. He is still on the payroll. He has seized all the security files

of the former Iraqi security agency which perhaps are a treasure trove

of names of people who collaborated both inside Iraq and outside Iraq

with the Saddam Hussein regime. But most importantly for the moment, he

is in charge of vetting former Baathists to take positions in this new

government.

He is sitting at the crossroads of billions of dollars of contracts

from his position on the Iraqi Governing Council. He is also an

individual who has the right to deny people their civil rights, if you

will, in Iraq, and he is someone whose record does not, I think,

suggest he is capable of discharging those responsibilities in the

interest of Iraq or in the interest of the United States. The key to

Mr. Chalabi is self-interest and always has been.

As a result, we are giving this individual inordinate power. This is

not just a theoretical political argument. When I was in Iraq last

November, I spoke to the division commander, and he complained to me he

had 1,000 schoolteachers who could not teach because they had been

nominal members of the Baath Party. Back in the days of Saddam Hussein,

in order to have a job in Iraq of any consequence, you had to have a

Baath affiliation. These people cannot work. Schools cannot open.

And so this new Iraq we are desperately trying to build based upon not

just security, but also economic development and education, has not yet

taken off.

This is just one example of the political miscalculation I believe in

which the provisional authority, Ambassador Bremer, has engaged in

Iraq.

All of this is very important. We are, again, weeks away from

transferring authority to some form of government of which we know not

the exact details. We are also in a situation where each day we see the

cost in terms of American lives.

Let me make one final point. When I was in Iraq talking with American

soldiers about 10 days ago, the palpable concern they had with these

explosive devices was obvious. We have soldiers who are paying Iraqis

to put some type of armor on their doors because canvas doors do not

stop a lot of small arms rounds or anything else.

We owe much more to those troops. We owe a budget that is real and

timely, and we owe leadership here that will respond to their needs.

I yield the floor.