Mr. President, the chaos in Iraq gets worse with every

week that goes by. Many key cities are now under the control of the

insurgents. Virtually every day we see car bombings, kidnappings,

assassinations, beheadings. American soldiers and Iraqi civilians are

being attacked and killed at an alarming and escalating rate. But if we

listen to the President, what we hear is sugar-coated happy talk.

The President says:

He says we have a strong government in Iraq headed by Mr. Allawi. He

says that because of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, democracy is spreading

Well, the President may have been a cheerleader in college, but we

need more than cheerleading now.

Let's be clear: President Bush misled us into this war, and he is

misleading us today about where we stand in Iraq. His misguided,

mismanaged war has become a quagmire with ever-rising body counts and

no end in sight.

Over the weekend, a host of Republican Senators stepped forward to

urge the President to face the facts and at long last to be open and

honest with the American people. On Sunday, Senator Hagel of Nebraska

said:

Senator Richard Lugar, distinguished chairman of the Foreign

Relations Committee, criticized what he called ``incompetence in the

administration'' that has resulted in a failed Iraq reconstruction

effort.

Senator John McCain said:

Senator Lindsey Graham said that we need to be

in Iraq.

Ironically, the President's father, George Herbert Walker Bush,

warned against the folly of invading and occupying Iraq. On February

28, 1999, speaking to a group of Desert Storm veterans at Fort Myer,

VA, the former President told them:

Then the first President Bush continued:

That was former President Bush in 1999.

Of course, we heard the same prophetic warnings from Brent Scowcroft,

James Baker, and other foreign policy experts. But this President Bush

and his partner Dick Cheney thought they knew better. So now the

disaster that Bush 41 warned against has become a reality under Bush

43. It is painfully clear that President George W. Bush's wrong

choices--in particular, the botched hunt for Osama bin Laden, the

invasion of Iraq based on false justifications, the Abu Ghraib torture

scandal, the alienation of our friends and the world--have been

profoundly destructive to America's national interest. They have

damaged our traditional alliances. They have undermined our moral

authority, and they have all but destroyed our credibility.

Worst of all, the actions of this administration have had the

perverse effect of encouraging, inciting, multiplying the terrorist

threat. Exhibit A is Osama bin Laden himself. It has been more than 3

years since the President pledged to of his cave. But

Mr. Bush did not smoke out Osama bin Laden. Instead, the Bush

administration got massively distracted by its obsession with Saddam

Hussein. These days, the days responsible for the murder of some 3,000

Americans on 9/11 is

In a press conference Secretary Rumsfeld had on September 10 of this

year, he mixed up Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden twice. Here is a

quote from our Secretary of Defense:

Well, Saddam Hussein, as John Stewart pointed out on ``The Daily

Show'' last night, is in prison. But he said that twice about Saddam

Hussein. You see, in their minds--in Rumsfeld's mind, Osama bin Laden

and Saddam Hussein are the same person. He cannot quite distinguish

them.

The problem is Osama bin Laden has not forgotten us. He and his

followers remain as dangerous today as on September 11, 2001. In July,

the administration issued a dire warning that bin Laden and his chief

lieutenants were directing an al-Qaida effort to launch a catastrophic

attack in the U.S. before the election.

There is broader evidence that the U.S. invasion of Iraq has incited,

encouraged, and stepped up the recruitment of terrorists around the

world. In April, the State Department issued its annual report on

terrorism, claiming a big drop in terrorist incidents--and success in

the war on terrorism. But, in June, the State Department acknowledged

this report was grossly incorrect. The State Department acknowledged

that, in fact, twice as many people died in terrorist attacks in 2003,

and terrorism around the world has increased significantly.

The objective statistical record is clear: As a consequence of

choices made by George W. Bush, America is weaker, America is less

secure, Americans traveling abroad are less secure, America is more

vulnerable. And the professionals--the men and women on the front

lines--know this is true.

Earlier this year, the Army War College published a report that

concluded, in so many words, that the administration has bungled the

war on terrorism. The report called the war in Iraq ``unnecessary.'' It

said Iraq

Who can disagree with these findings? With our military tied down in

Iraq indefinitely, unable to respond to real threats, America is

weaker, not stronger. We are less secure, not more secure. We are more

vulnerable, not less vulnerable.

I was struck, several weeks ago, by a statement from one of our

colleagues, Congressman Doug Bereuter of Nebraska. Mr. Bereuter is vice

chairman of the House Intelligence Committee and a senior Republican

member of the House International Relations Committee. Congressman

Bereuter was a strong supporter of the House resolution authorizing the

President to go to war. But in a letter to constituents, he now says

the invasion of Iraq was unjustified and

He said,