Mr. President, over the weekend the Senate passed my

resolution, S. Res. 338, to honor the first 2,152 troops who have died

in Iraq and Afghanistan by listing their names and hometowns in the

Congressional Record. They deserve this tribute for their valiant

support of their military obligations.

I appreciate the support of my colleagues on this measure. It is a

symbolic way for us to honor each of our fallen heroes individually.

But there is another way we can honor their memory. And that is to be

honest and truthful about the war in which they fought--Iraq.

The President has taken small steps toward candor on Iraq, but the

denial of reality is still apparent in his speeches.

To make matters worse, the President is still making insulting

insinuations about those who criticize his Iraq policy. In his Sunday

night address to the nation, President Bush said:

Does this statement suggest that those who disagree with the

President would not even spend a trivial amount to protect America's

international interests?

The President states that the sacrifices in Iraq are made in dimes

and days. But what about lives?

What about the more than two American lives given each day so far

this year in Iraq? The President didn't mention that.

I have gone to many memorial services and funerals for brave, young

Americans from New Jersey who died in Iraq. Seventy-three soldiers with

ties to New Jersey have died in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I have also visited Walter Reed Army Hospital here in Washington

several times, and I have been struck by the incredible resilience and

dedication to country of those young Americans.

While these brave men and women put their lives on the line, this

administration bypasses reality.

Today we know that Iraq did not pose an imminent threat to our

national security. We know that there were not weapons of mass

destruction. We also learned that Iraq had nothinq to do with 9/11 and

actually had an adversarial relationship with al-Qaida.

There is no doubt Saddam Hussein was a maniacal dictator who killed,

tortured, and suppressed his own people.

But President Bush did not call for an invasion of Iraq based on

Saddam's treatment of his own people. President Bush called for war

with Iraq because he argued that Saddam was a direct threat to the

American people.

That turned out to be untrue, plain and simple.

Now, in the wake of the administration's mishandling of this war,

much of Iraq has turned into a magnet for terrorists and extremists.

President Bush continues to say that Iraq is a ``central

front of the war on terror.'' But the reality is that Iraq has become a

terrorist front as a result of President Bush's mistakes.

Our 160,000 troops in Iraq have become a tarqet for cowardly

insurgents who attack us with roadside bombs and suicide attacks.

This is not progress.

Despite claims by supporters of the President's Iraq policy we are

not making sufficient progress in Iraq. Unfortunately, we may be

sinking deeper into a quaqmire.

We have not made progress because the President has never put

together a coherent plan for postinvasion Iraq.

For evidence of this, one need only look at the infamous speech

aboard the aircraft carrier on May 1, 2003, when President Bush

declared ``mission accomplished.''

``Mission accomplished'' sure sounded like the job was done and our

troops can begin to come home.

But we now know the mission was not accomplished on May 1, 2003.

More recently, over the past few weeks, President Bush has been

making speeches about Iraq in an attempt to reshape people's

perceptions of the war. The President knows that polls show that a

majority of the American people do not believe that the war is being

managed properly.

President Bush thinks if something is repeated often enough, people

will eventually believe it.

But the American people will not stand still while we lose more of

our courageous young men and women.

We all pray that Thursday's Iraqi elections will lead to a viable

government that will create stability. It could be a critical first

step.

But where are the plans if the elections do not lead to success? How

long until more lost lives exhaust the patience and will of the

American people?

In the meantime, supporters of the President point to evidence of

significant progress as more satellite dishes appear on Iraqi roofs and

cell phones are in Iraqi hands. But while the anxiety and fear existing

in thousands of American families continues, Iraqi satellite dishes and

cell phones do not suggest relief.

It seems possible to get an honest assessment from the administration

of any future plans to get our people home.

That probably explains why some of President Bush's statements on

Iraq have been contradicted by current military leaders.

For example, last June President Bush said there were 160,000 Iraqi

troops trained and ready to fight. But then, a few months later, Gen.

Georqe W. Casey, Jr.--the top U.S. commander in Iraq--said only one

Iraqi battalion was able to conduct operations independently of

American forces. That means less than a thousand Iraqi soldiers were

actually equipped to fight without our help.

And we should pay close attention to what the former head of U.S.

Central Command--retired Gen. Anthony Zinni--said about this Iraq

operation.

General Zinni has described the poor planning for the Iraq war as,

General Zinni went on to say,

Other generals with vast experience voiced serious doubt to the White

House about Iraq, including Norman Schwarzkopf, Wesley Clark, Brent

Scowcroft and Eric Shinseki.

But the people who wear a suit--not a uniform--in the administration

didn't listen.

I served in the Army. I have met thousands of soldiers. I know that

it takes about 3 months to turn a young American into a trained and

dedicated soldier. So why has it taken almost 3 years to train a

handful of Iraqis to be able to fight for their country?

President Bush also said this war has made us safer. But Iraq is not

safe for our troops or the Iraqi people. We had 85 soldiers killed last

month--one of the deadliest months since the war began.

There have been over 70 suicide bombings in the last 2 months, an

average of more than one a day and more than 3,000 concealed bombs

either exploded or discovered.

President Bush points to last Thursday's parliamentary elections in

Iraq as a sign that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Let's hope

this is true.

But we have heard rosy predictions from this President before, yet

the insurgency seemed to only grow each time.

Remember: We also heard rosy predictions when the President said

``mission accomplished.'' We heard it when Saddam Hussein was captured.

We heard it a year ago after the first election in Iraq.

Meanwhile, 2,158 of our best young Americans have been killed. And

nearly 16,000 have been wounded--many with injuries that will forever

change their lives. No wonder a significant majority of the American

people do not believe that President Bush has a plan to end this war.

That is why it is time for the President to give the American people

a realistic plan for bringing our troops home.

What needs to happen? How many Iraqi troops need to be trained?

Let us set reliable goals for our mission, with an understanding of

what it will take to get the job done and brinq our troops back home to

their families.

Mr. President, we don't want our leader to deny us the hard facts of

war. And we don't want the price of this conflict hidden by prohibiting

photographs of the flag-draped coffins that carry heroes back to our

shores.

We need a leader who recognizes what a majority of the American

people see taking place in front of their eyes on television, in our

newspapers, in our homes, and in our hearts.

President Bush, I ask you to be frank with us about what we are

facing in the future in Iraq. Show us how you will work to avoid

further loss of life. And while we honor the memories of those who have

perished, we must do whatever we can to make life more bearable for

their families.