Mr. President, President Bush's address to the Nation

Tuesday night on the war in Iraq was more of the same we have been

hearing for so long.

We all agree that our men and women in uniform are serving with great

skill, dedication, and courage under enormously difficult circumstances

in Iraq. The policy of our Government must be worthy of their

sacrifice, but unfortunately, it is not, and the American people know

it.

The President chose to wrap himself in the tragedy of September 11.

He spoke explicitly of the tragedy five times, and he invoked the

danger of Osama bin Laden twice. He spoke about terrorists 26 times,

and he spoke of terror an additional 9 times, but the American people

know that the war in Iraq had nothing to do with September 11.

Even after 9/11, it is wrong for this President or any President to

shoot first and ask questions later, to rush to war and ignore serious

doubts by experienced military officers and experienced officials in

the State Department and the CIA about the justification for the war

and the strategy for waging it.

We all know that Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator. We have known

it for more than 20 years. We are proud, very proud, of our troops for

their extraordinary and swift success in removing Saddam from power.

But as we also now know beyond doubt, Saddam did not pose the kind of

immediate threat to our national security that could possibly justify a

unilateral, preventive war without the broad support of the

international community. There was no reason whatever to go to war when

we did, in the way we did, and for the false reasons we were given.

The administration's insistence that Saddam could provide nuclear

material, or even nuclear weapons, to al-qaida has been exposed as an

empty threat. It should have never been used by President Bush to

justify an ideological war that America never should have fought.

Saddam had no nuclear weapons. In fact, not only were there no

nuclear weapons, there were no chemical or biological weapons either,

no weapons of mass destruction of any kind.

Nor was there any persuasive link between al-qaida and Saddam and the

9/11 attacks. A 9/11 Commission Staff Statement put it plainly:

The 9/11 Commission Report stated clearly that there was no

``operational'' connection between Saddam and al-qaida.

Nonetheless, President Bush continues to cling to the fiction that

there was a relationship between Saddam and al-qaida.

That is the same logic President Bush keeps using today in his

repeated stubborn insistence that we are making progress in Iraq, and

that we and the world are safer because Saddam is gone.

In fact, the war with Iraq has made us less safe. It has created a

breeding ground for terrorists that did not previously exist. It has

created a powerful recruitment tool for al-qaida, and made it harder--

much harder--to win the real war on terrorism--the war against al-

qaida.

Our soldiers in Iraq need more than assurances of progress from the

President. They need more than a public relations campaign. They need

an effective plan to end the violence, bring peace and stability to

Iraq, and return home with dignity and honor.

The President did not level with our troops and the American people

and offer an effective strategy for success.

The President spoke about the importance of training the Iraqi

security forces, but failed to outline a clear strategy to accelerate

their training and improve their capability.

The training of the Iraqi security forces continues to falter. The

administration still has not given the American people a straight

answer about how many Iraqi security forces are adequately trained and

equipped. In the words of the Government Accountability Office:

The President spoke about the importance of our reconstruction

effort, but he failed to outline a clear strategy to create jobs and

hope for the Iraqi people, and neutralize the temptation to join the

insurgents. As of June 15, the administration only spent $6 billion--

one-third--of the $18 billion Congress provided last summer for

reconstruction. Of the money we do spend, it is far from clear how much

is actually creating jobs and improving the quality of life. We need

greater focus on small projects to create jobs for Iraqis, not huge

grants to multinational corporations that create profits for corporate

executives instead of stability for the Iraqi people.

The President spoke about the importance of the international

community in Iraq, but he failed to suggest a clear strategy to bring

in additional foreign troops to help us get the job done in Iraq.

If NATO is willing to send additional troops to help secure Iraq's

borders, the President should ask them to do so. He did not.

If the United Nations is willing to send a force to help secure

Iraq's borders, the President should ask the U.N. to do so. He did not.

Nor did the President offer any strategy to prevent further

reductions in the forces of the international coalition. A year ago, we

had 34 coalition partners in Iraq. Nine of those partners have pulled

out. Today, we have just 25. American forces still make up nearly 85

percent of the troops fighting in Iraq. By the end of the year, five

more countries among the largest contributors of troops are scheduled

to pull out. The President said nothing about how he intends to prevent

more troops in the coalition from pulling out.

The President spoke about the hard work of our troops, he urged

Americans to send them letters and raise flags in their honor, but he

did not assure them that they will have the equipment they need to

fight the war.

More than 400 of our troops in Iraq have died in military vehicles

hit by roadside bombs, grenades, and other so-called improvised

explosive devices. Yet troops don't have the protective equipment they

need. The Marines are still waiting for the 495 armored humvees they

ordered last year.

The American people rightly believe we are bogged down in Iraq and

that the President has no realistic strategy for success. A quagmire by

any other name is still a quagmire. The dictionary defines a quagmire

as ``a complex or precarious position where disengagement is

difficult.'' That is precisely what we have in Iraq--not because of the

hard work and dedication of our military, but because of the persistent

mistakes made by the President and his national security team.

No one has been more responsible for those mistakes than Secretary of

Defense Rumsfeld. He has been consistently wrong about Iraq.

He was wrong about weapons of mass destruction.

He was wrong about the number of troops we would need in Iraq.

He was wrong to keep calling the insurgents deadenders.

He was wrong to send our service men and women into battle month

after month without proper armor.

He was wrong to exaggerate our success in training Iraqi security

forces.

A single word spoke volumes at the Senate Armed Services Committee

hearing on Iraq on June 23. Secretary Rumsfeld's prepared testimony

contained these words:

He repeated those words to the committee with a notable exception. He

left out the word ``mistake.''

Accepting the resignation of Donald Rumsfeld is the most important

first step the President can take toward a new and more successful

policy in Iraq.

Reality is difficult to swallow. Facts, as John Adams once said, are

stubborn things. President Bush should face the facts and accept them.

I say this with deep sorrow and regret for our service men and women,

their families, and friends. They deserve better and they deserve it

now.