Mr. President, I rise this morning to talk about

several issues relative to what is happening in Iraq today. First, the

terrible offenses that occurred at the Abu Ghraib prison that came

forth a couple of weeks ago have obscured some of the positive things

that have been happening relative to the war on the ground in Iraq. We

made some great strides over the last couple of weeks and, once again,

we have every reason to be extremely proud of our brave men and women

who are carrying out this war against terrorism, because we are winning

this war.

We are seeing more of the bad guys taken out in Iraq today, and a lot

of that has been obscured by what happened at Abu Ghraib and the

revelations that have been forthcoming relative to those incidents over

the past couple of weeks.

With respect to Abu Ghraib and to the individuals who were involved

in the atrocities that took place there, our Army is doing exactly what

it is supposed to do relative to issues such as this. We are doing a

complete and thorough investigation of the facts. Those who committed

offenses for which they need to be held accountable are going to be

held accountable, irrespective of their level of management.

I say that because these atrocities may have been carried out by

privates or sergeants or any other enlisted or officer personnel up the

line. If they were, then they are going to be held accountable. If any

of these atrocities were carried out by civilians, they are going to be

held accountable likewise.

Major General Taguba produced a very professional and comprehensive

report on what did take place at Abu Ghraib. He found what happened

there was a total lack of discipline and a failure of leadership. Our

military forces want to be held accountable because those who are doing

the great job over there--and this is 99.99 percent of our military

personnel--want us to get to the bottom of this, just as everybody in

America and every other individual around the world wants us to do. And

we are going to do that.

Second, there was an announcement yesterday that the coalition forces

discovered sarin gas in an artillery round, and that is a very

significant fact. I don't think we can overstate the significance of

this, but by the same token we need to be careful as to how far we go.

There was a lot of criticism leveled at this administration for

conducting this war on the basis that weapons of mass destruction were

in Iraq and in the possession of Saddam Hussein and that was the sole

reason we went to war with Iraq. That simply was not the case. We

debated that and will continue to debate that down the road. But the

fact is those of us who kept saying we know the weapons of mass

destruction are there because Saddam Hussein admitted he had them--and

he never told us what he did with them so we know they are there--that

theory has now been validated.

But is this the be-all and end-all relative to the issue of weapons

of mass destruction? I don't think so. I don't think we need to get

overexcited. I think we need to continue to allow the Iraq Survey Team

to do their investigation and at the end of the day we will find out

what did happen, how many weapons of mass destruction exist today, and

where those weapons are. We will proceed with the destruction of those

weapons that once belonged to Saddam Hussein. It is important that we

find and destroy these weapons of mass destruction so they can't be

used by terrorists, as they attempted to do last weekend.

Third, I want to mention the killing yesterday of the President of

the Iraqi Governing Council, Mr. Izzedine Salim. Mr. Salim was a

respected member of the IGC. His leadership will be missed. Our

thoughts and prayers go out to his family.

However, his successor, Mr. Ajil al-Yawar, will lead the IGC over the

next 6 weeks until political sovereignty is turned over to the new

Iraqi government on June 30. The terrorists and anarchists fighting to

keep Iraq from becoming a free and democratic state are not going to

win. We are not going to let the killing of a fine individual such as

Mr. Salim keep the people of Iraq from forming a new, free and

independent government and obtaining their democracy.

The perspective on these events is very important. We will turn over

sovereignty to Iraq on 30 June. We have discovered weapons of mass

destruction and we need to continue our search for others. We need to

let our investigation on Abu Ghraib be completed before making

pronouncements on who was responsible.

Last, I would like to relate that about 4 weeks ago, I had the

pleasure of visiting 14 of our military institutions in Europe within a

4-day period. During that period of time, Senator Sessions, Senator

Enzi, and myself had the occasion to visit with individual members of

our Armed Forces such as those who belong to the 173rd Airborne

Brigade, who are stationed at Caserme Ederly in Vicenza, Italy, who

spent a year in Kirkuk, Iraq. They were the original occupying troops

in Kirkuk. We had the occasion to visit with spouses of our soldiers

who, today, are deployed to Iraq. We also had the opportunity to visit

at Landstuhl Hospital at Ramstein, Germany, individuals who have been

injured in Iraq. I have to say, every time I am around those men and

women, my heart beats a little faster because they are not only the

finest young men and women America has to offer, but they are doing a

fantastic job of representing America, whether it is doing their duty

of being fighting men and women or whether it is doing what they

probably do best, and that is being the greatest ambassadors America

has right now in that part of the world.

The men and women in the 173rd Airborne Brigade, for example, said

when they marched into Kirkuk, the Iraqi people viewed them as simply

an occupying military force, which was not going to be supportive of

the goals that the citizens of Kirkuk wanted to see carried out; that

is, to have their children educated, to have hospitals, to have water

and sewer and power restored.

As the weeks and months went on, however, the members of the 173rd

Airborne Brigade did exactly what the local people didn't believe

possible: They rebuilt the hospitals, they rebuilt and opened the

schools, they fixed the power grid so electricity could be restored to

the citizens of that community, as well as increasing the availability

of water and sewer, so at the point in time when the 173rd needed to be

returned home, there were tears shed on both sides. The bonding between

our fighting men and women, these soldiers and goodwill ambassadors,

and the people of Kirkuk was exactly as we envisioned it should be;

that is, our men and women had done a great job of liberating those

people and at the same time had made good friends and had been great

ambassadors for the United States in that part of the world.

At Landstuhl, I will have to say the attitude of soldiers who had

received, in some cases, very serious injuries was unbelievable. One

young man who was from the home State of the Presiding Officer, as he

and I discussed, who had his right leg shot off below the knee, made a

comment to me as I walked in the room--and he had a big smile on his

face. He said:

What greater attitude, commitment, and dedication can you have from

any individual? That young man is simply a shining light out there

today and should far overshadow the stories we see coming out of Abu

Ghraib.

Also, the spouses of the soldiers who are deployed to Iraq today, the

spouses we visited with, about 35 or 40 of them, had, again, an

unbelievable attitude. Our military families are truly that. They are

families. They stand side by side with their spouses and support their

deployment to any part of the world. But particularly now with respect

to this very difficult and complex deployment in Iraq, these spouses

had the opportunity to engage with us and to come forward to complain

about a number of things, but they never did. They were all positive

and said they knew their husbands were doing the right thing, they were

truly supportive of them, and once again our military families were a

shining light of which we can all be very proud.