Madam President, I thank the chairman and distinguished

ranking member of the Armed Services Committee. It is more with sadness

than in anger that I rise to respond to recent allegations made by some

Democrats that the Bush administration ``manufactured and manipulated

intelligence in order to sell the war in Iraq.'' War is serious

business. I don't need to remind my colleagues that more than 2,000

Americans have sacrificed their lives fighting to liberate the Iraqi

people, and many brave Texans are among them.

Today, Iraq represents the central front in the global war on terror.

Yet we have even seen the sad occasion of having sustained 2,000 deaths

of America's fighting men and women in Iraq spark an ill-advised and

premature call for withdrawal of our troops by the angry antiwar left.

That call has been picked up, in part, if not in whole, by some

politicians seeking to capitalize on that anger. But merely venting

anger without proposing alternative solutions is not the work of

serious people. It is a sad commentary on our public discourse when

politicians seek to use the sacrifice of our men and women in uniform

to advance a political agenda.

While the critics focused on 2,000 Americans killed in action in

Iraq, another important number to remember is 3,000--the number of

innocent Americans killed on September 11. Is there any doubt that if

we pulled out of Iraq prematurely without stabilizing security, without

building the necessary infrastructure, and without allowing Iraqis to

build successful democratic institutions as they are doing, that 9/11

would be repeated over and over and over again by an enemy that would

continue to target innocent civilians in pursuit of their perverse

ideology? If Iraq descends into civil war or is overrun by terrorists,

if Iraq becomes a place where terrorists recruit, train, and export

terror with impunity, how long do the critics believe it would take

until we would be hit again on our own soil?

The war on terrorism is a war we must win. The stakes are too high to

use the war on terror as a political football. If there is any doubt

about the enemy and their goals, all one needs to do is read the letter

from Osama bin Laden's chief deputy, Zawahiri, his chief lieutenant in

Iraq. Zawahiri clearly describes al-Qaida's vision of establishing an

Islamic caliphate that would rule the Middle East and eventually the

world. It would also, not incidentally, include the destruction of our

best ally in the Middle East, the state of Israel.

Although we are making progress in Iraq, as we saw most recently

during the successful referendum on the constitution, there is

obviously more work that needs to be done. We know that our troops have

the will to win. I am concerned that there are some here at home and

even in the Senate who do not share this same resolve because they

stubbornly refuse to learn the lessons of 9/11.

The latest accusation by some in the Democratic leadership, that the

administration has manipulated intelligence and has exaggerated the

threat, is nothing more than an effort to use the war in Iraq for

political gain. That is shameful. It devalues the sacrifice our men and

women are making on the battlefield every day. It places at risk

everything that Americans have sacrificed on behalf of the cause of

liberty here and abroad. Do the critics need to be reminded that it was

a few years ago when Democrats joined Republicans in a bipartisan

acknowledgment that Saddam Hussein posed a threat to the world?

In fact, it was the Senate, in 1998, that unanimously passed the Iraq

Liberation Act that called for the United States to support efforts to

overthrow that terrible dictator. It was President Clinton who so

eloquently described the threat posed by Saddam Hussein and the

consequences of inaction when he said:

President Clinton went on to say:

President Clinton was correct in that assessment made in 1998. We are

fortunate that today Saddam Hussein is no longer a threat to the region

or to the world due to the bipartisan vote of the Congress to authorize

the use of force to remove Saddam Hussein in October of 2002. It was a

bipartisan vote of the Senate that authorized that use of force.

Today, the political dynamics have changed. For their own cynical

reasons, some Democrats have charged that the Bush administration has

somehow manipulated intelligence to justify the war in Iraq. These same

individuals are calling for yet another investigation to somehow

justify their patently false claims. I remind my colleagues that this

issue has been investigated not only by the Senate Select Committee on

Intelligence but the bipartisan Silberman-Robb Commission. Of course,

the results of both investigations do not support the charges of

manipulation, so we hear yet another call for another investigation.

Wishing that the results were different cannot make it so. What do they

propose? To initiate investigation after investigation until somehow

they manage to will into existence the results they have been hoping

for, I imagine.

I wish to ask my colleagues, did President Clinton lie when he

discussed the intelligence that led him to support the forced ouster of

Saddam Hussein? Did he manipulate intelligence to justify his bombing

in Iraq? Or did he rely upon the same intelligence that this

administration and this Congress and our allies did when they came to

the same conclusion that Saddam was a threat to the region and to the

world? Are there Senators who today would renounce their vote to remove

Saddam by force in October of 2002? Out of the bipartisan 77 who voted

to authorize the use of force to remove Saddam Hussein, I have only

learned of two who have said they regret that vote and would renounce

it.

Before the war, a leading Democrat--in fact, the Democratic leader--

clearly stated his position in Iraq. As of this morning, his quotation

was still on his Senate Web site. It says:

I agree with this statement on the Web site of Senator Reid of today,

November 7, 2005. But today we are told by the same Democratic leader

that somehow this administration was responsible for manipulating

intelligence to authorize the war in Iraq when, in fact, he took the

same position at the time that force was used. At least his Web site

takes that same position today.

For the record, I would like to read the conclusions of the

Intelligence Committee investigation and the Silberman-Robb

investigation so there will be no doubt that the Bush administration

did not manipulate intelligence to justify this war. The Intelligence

Committee report, which was supported by both Democrats and

Republicans, states the following:

Likewise, the Silberman-Robb Commission, a bipartisan commission

appointed to look into our intelligence failures, concluded:

Madam President, this much is clear. No one attempted to manipulate

intelligence leading up to the war in Iraq--not President Clinton, not

Members of the Senate, not this administration, all of whom, based upon

the same intelligence, concluded that Saddam represented an imminent

threat to the national security of the United States. Instead, we found

that while some of our intelligence was wrong on Hussein, it was

obvious, and it is obvious today, that he was a threat to the civilized

world.

I believe all of this crystallizes into a question about how doubts

are resolved in a dangerous and uncertain world. Do we resolve doubts

in favor of a tyrant who has used weapons of mass destruction on his

own people, who demonstrated an interest in acquiring nuclear weapons,

who refused to cooperate with weapons inspectors after 17 Security

Council resolutions ordered him to do so, and who at last count

murdered at least 400,000 of his own people who are lying in mass

graves?

Giving Saddam Hussein the benefit of the doubt would have been a

crazy and irresponsible thing to do. Of course, the 77 Senators who

voted for the use of force against Saddam in October 2002 weren't

buying that Saddam was some harmless individual then.

So why now? Sure, we need better intelligence and we have undertaken

substantial and meaningful intelligence reform to remedy the defects.

Intelligence by its very nature is never certain, but we are

restructuring our intelligence community to ensure the President of our

country, whether he be Democrat or Republican, gets the most accurate

intelligence available.

Meanwhile, I hope the Members of this body who have politicized this

issue by making false allegations of manipulation of intelligence would

realize that their allegations only serve to divide the American people

and to dishonor the sacrifice of our brave men and women in uniform and

undermine critical American resolve to finish the important work that

we are about in Iraq.