Mr. President, last Friday, on Veterans Day, President

Bush attacked those of us who questioned or criticized his conduct of

the Iraq war. Once again, he tried to portray his critics as opposing

our own troops or aiding their enemies. Once again, he was wrong. Once

again, he tried to blame others for his mistakes and for the failures

of his policies--mistakes and failures that have trapped 158,000 of

America's best and bravest soldiers in Iraq for over 2\1/2\ years,

since the fall of Saddam Hussein, with no end in sight.

Let's be clear that every person in this Senate supports our troops

1,000 percent. We provided every dollar requested for defense

authorizations, appropriations, and supplementals with overwhelming

bipartisan and often unanimous support. Some of us have tried to

provide more funding than the administration would support for our

returning troops and veterans. We have never accused them of being

against our troops or un-American.

Together, on the Senate Armed Services Committee on which I am proud

to sit, Republicans and Democrats have repeatedly asked our civilian

and military commanders: What more do you need to win this war as soon

as possible? What do you need to bring our troops home as safely and

quickly as possible, with the victory that they won in 3 weeks in the

spring of 2003 secured, finally, by the Iraqis? Tell us what you need,

and it is yours.

This Senate has not failed our troops. This Senator, a critic of your

policies, has not failed our troops. You, sir, have failed our troops;

and you, sir, have failed the American people by the failures of your

policies in Iraq.

Last Friday, President Bush stood in front of a banner that said:

``Strategy For Victory.'' Two and a half years ago, he stood on the

aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln before a banner: ``Mission

Accomplished.'' Unfortunately, he had the banners mixed up. If he had a

``Strategy For Victory'' 2\1/2\ years ago, we would have ``Mission

Accomplished'' today.

The President accuses his critics of rewriting the history of this

war. Nonsense. The history of this war was clearly enunciated by this

administration and is available for all to reread. The President, the

Vice President, and their top advisers repeatedly presented their

rationales for this war and predicted its outcomes, and they were

repeatedly wrong. On just about everything, they were wrong. I say that

with sorrow because when the President of the United States is wrong,

all Americans suffer the consequences.

There is no better or worse summary of the administration's prewar

fallacies than the transcript of Vice President Cheney's appearance on

``Meet The Press'' with Tim Russert the Sunday before the invasion

began. I excerpted those remarks for brevity but without altering their

meaning.

The Vice President said on the program, as he had said repeatedly

during the past 7 months:

When Mr. Russert queried:

Vice President Cheney replied:

On every one of those key assertions, Vice President Cheney was

wrong. Whether he was misinformed, misguided, mistaken, or knowingly

misleading the American people, I cannot say. I can say that he was

consistently wrong. And because he and the President were wrong, over

2,000 of our best and bravest Americans have lost their lives in Iraq.

Many thousands more have returned home wounded or maimed for life.

Hundreds of thousands more have been separated from their families for

years, with more separations for more years still to come.

Because the Bush administration's assumptions and expectations were

wrong, because their preparations for post-Saddam Hussein Iraq were

wrong, and because their predictions before and after the war began

were wrong, America's standing in the world is worse than before. The

terrorist organizations that hate the United States are stronger than

before, and our national security is tragically and terribly weaker

than before this war began.

When I voted against the Iraq war resolution in October of 2002, I

said I hoped I was wrong and the war's proponents were right because

the stakes were too high for partisanship. When I disagreed with

President Bush's decision to invade Iraq in March of 2003, I said I

hoped I was wrong and he was right because the stakes were too high for

anything but patriotism.

I deeply regret when he has been wrong. I deeply regret the mistakes

of his policies and the failures of his practices because a President's

mistakes and failures become America's mistakes and failures. And

America, the greatest Nation on Earth, the leader of the world's hopes

and opportunities for peace and prosperity, America cannot afford

mistakes and failures in this difficult and dangerous world, and this

world cannot afford America's mistakes and failures.

Two and a half years after our troops toppled Saddam Hussein is too

long for 158,000 of Americas's soldiers, the world's best and bravest,

to still be doing the patroling, the policing, the fighting, the

bleeding, and the dying in Iraq--too long, and there is no end in

sight. It is because we support our troops, because they are our sons

and daughters and we love them, that we want to bring them home safely

as soon as possible with their military successes of 2\1/2\ years ago

secured by Iraqis, not Americans.

The President and the Vice President could show their support for our

troops by telling them and us what the strategy for victory in Iraq

really is and how and when we will achieve it and what are the

timetables and measures of that success or lack of it so our courageous

fighting men and women and their families and their fellow Americans

can know how they will win, when they will win. Those are the answers

they and we deserve.