Madam President, I rise today to discuss U.S. military

operations in Iraq.

Four years ago, we invaded Iraq to disarm an oppressor's regime and

restore control of that country to its own people. In the early hours

of March 20, 2003, the United States, joined by our coalition partners,

began a military campaign against the regime of Saddam Hussein. Code

named ``shock and awe,'' the first 24 hours of combat operations filled

the country with punishing air attacks. As the massive firestorm of

bombs and missiles targeted Iraqi leadership, ground forces rolled

towards Iraq's capital.

Without question, our military operations were swift and decisive.

Approximately 120,000 U.S. troops, as well as a number of forces from

our coalition partners, led the invasion into Iraq. Ground forces moved

into Baghdad, formally occupied the city, and the Hussein government

collapsed approximately 3 weeks after military operations began. Saddam

Hussein and his top leadership were captured, killed, or forced into

hiding by coalition forces.

With Saddam on the run many Iraqis celebrated the downfall of the

oppressive regime.

While some fighting in Iraq continued, the major battles appeared

over just one month after the start of the military campaign. And 43

days after announcing the beginning of the war, President Bush declared

that, ``Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of

Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed.''

Undoubtedly, the President was wrong. After remarkable success during

the initial combat operations, it appears that the Bush administration

did not sufficiently prepare for the consequences of their military

victory. The Bush administration could not have known everything about

what it would find in Iraq.

But it could have, and should have, done far more than it did.

As George Washington once said, ``There is nothing so likely to

produce

peace as to be well prepared to meet the enemy.'' In the aftermath of

the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the Baathist regime, the U.S.

proved it was ill-equipped for the post combat environment it would

face. As a result, the Bush administration made grave and glaring

political, military, and intelligence miscalculations.

As it turned out, the defeat of the Iraqi army was just the beginning

of the war. Prewar plans drastically underestimated the number of

troops necessary in a post-Saddam Iraq.

The troop level of the invasion force proved inadequate to hold the

country together after Saddam's regime was removed. The Bush

administration failed to heed the warnings of experienced, senior

military officers who stressed the need for a large force structure in

country to provide security.

In particular, on the eve of the invasion, then Chief of Staff of the

Army, General Eric Shinseki, predicted ``something on the order of

several hundred thousand solders'' would be required to keep peace in a

postwar Iraq.

While it is evident that General Shinseki was on the mark with his

force calculations, the general's comments were quickly dismissed by

the Department of Defense as ``wildly off the mark.'' Consequently, the

U.S. invaded with what proved to be an insufficient number of troops to

secure a postwar Iraq.

Immediately after the invasion, it was readily apparent that serious

miscalculations, poor prewar planning, misguided assumptions, and

wildly optimistic administration reporting was the order of the day.

When the Iraqi Government collapsed, there was no framework in place

capable of filling the military, political, and economic void.

U.S. combat units were assigned to patrol large urban areas with no

sense of their mission and no standard set of operating procedures.

Looting and other criminal activities were rampant. The U.S. forces

were vastly inadequate to control the mounting violence, since the Bush

administration had mistakenly believed that U.S. forces would be

greeted as liberators rather than as occupiers. The reality was

widespread lawlessness throughout the country.

To make matters worse, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld denounced

the extent of the chaos as simply an expression of pent-up hostility

towards the old regime.

``It's untidy.'' Rumsfeld said. ``And freedom's untidy. And free

people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes.''

We clearly underestimated the disorder and chaos the toppling of the

regime would cause. Then we failed to effectively respond to it once it

did. The Bush administration simply did not believe that a major

reconstruction effort would be required and they were unprepared when

the Iraqi infrastructure collapsed. As a result, interagency rivalry

and turf wars between the Departments of Defense and State plagued the

immediate restoration of security and basic services.

Amid the escalating violence and civil disorder, the Department of

Defense deployed a small reconstruction effort, led by retired

Lieutenant General Jay Garner. Garner became the Bush administration's

fall guy for the problems and chaos in Iraq. He was blamed for not

implementing key services or restoring order fast enough. Yet, he was

prevented from cooperating with planners in the Central Command and

denied key personnel increases. He was replaced less than one month

after reconstruction efforts began.

At this critical juncture, perhaps the single most important event in

the destabilization of Iraq after the cessation of large scale military

operations occurred--Garner's replacement, Ambassador Paul Bremer,

demobilized the Iraqi Army.

The abrupt decision in May 2003 to disband the entire force,

including apolitical conscripts, may have been one of the most grievous

mistakes made by our occupying force. The decision allowed enemies of a

democratic Iraq the time necessary to regroup and infiltrate the under-

secured nation.

We disbanded an organization that would have been vital for providing

security and assisting in the rebuilding. The 300,000 strong force

almost immediately morphed from soldiers to bitter, unemployed, armed

terrorists who became prime recruits for the insurgency efforts. The

result of this one decision, gave an enormous boost to the forces of

instability in Iraq.

In the fall of 2003, the administration faced the dilemma of securing

a nation with a limited occupation force and no Iraqi security

structures in place.

While the Bush administration could have opted to deploy additional

forces from the United States, the Department of Defense chose to speed

up the Iraqi Army training program. The effect, inevitably, produced

Iraqi soldiers who were neither properly trained nor fully committed to

the mission.

This problem became even more severe with the creation of the Iraqi

Civil Defense Corps. The Corps' purpose was to provide local militia

forces as adjuncts to the Iraqi army. However, the Bush administration

was impatient to create more Iraqi troops to illustrate that additional

U.S. forces were unnecessary.

They once again increased the training pace which restricted the

vetting process of the Iraqi troops. The result was an Iraqi Civil

Defense Corps limited in its combat capability, thoroughly infiltrated

by insurgents, who predictably collapsed whenever committed to combat.

With nothing to fill the power void left by the regime's fall, the

U.S. ended up creating a failed state that allowed the insurgency to

develop.

The United States did not anticipate the deeply divided Iraqi

society--one with the Sunnis resentful over the loss of their dominant

position and the Shiites seeking power commensurate with their majority

status--would devolve the country into sectarian violence.

The Bush administration was clearly unprepared for the likelihood

that these ethnic differences and the dramatic shift in the power

dynamics would cause the sects to engage in violent conflict. Perhaps

even more importantly, the administration did not foresee that the U.S.

military, as an occupying force, would itself be the target of

resentment and armed attacks.

Since the invasion, lingering Shiite resentment and Sunni fears

associated with the shift in power have helped transform local and

individual political or economic disputes into broader religious

confrontations. Moreover, the Bush administration insisted that all of

the problems of the country were caused by the insurgency, rather than

that all of the problems of the country were helping to fuel the

insurgency. Security was not established after the fall of the

Ba'athist government and still remains beyond our grasp.

As a result, the hardening of sectarian and ethnic identities in a

postwar Iraq has created significant anxiety among Iraq's neighbors,

many of whom also have religiously and ethnically diverse populations.

Toppling the regime and dismantling the Iraqi armed forces removed a

potential military threat to the Middle East region. Yet, it also

eliminated the area's principal strategic counterbalance to Iran. The

instability and violence in Iraq, coupled with Iraq's neighbors' fears

of an emboldened and potentially hostile Iran, has created new concerns

among Middle Eastern nations and sparked increased interest in the

future of Iraq.

In particular, Gulf governments worry that escalating sectarian

violence in Iraq could spread to Iraq's mainly Sunni neighbors and

force them into conflict with Shiite-controlled Iran. Gulf governments

also believe that regions in Iraq could become safe havens for

terrorist organizations if the Iraqi government collapses or the U.S.

withdraws troops precipitously.

As we debate a strategy for Iraq, we need to make certain we paint

the big picture and understand what is at stake. If we precipitously

withdraw our troops, we will open the door for the Iranians to exert

even more influence in both Iraq and the Middle East.

Iran clearly has regional aspirations that will significantly

increase without a counterbalance in the Persian Gulf.

However, more than just the strategic balance of the region is at

stake. The oil reserves in Iraq are vast--believed to be only second in

size in the Middle East to those of Saudi Arabia. Imagine over half the

world's oil in the hands of the mullahs in Tehran. Picture the world

with another nuclear power that hates the United States and all it

stands for. The President is correct when he states that those who say

the future of Iraq is not a direct threat to our national security are

deluding themselves.

Madam President, we are now living with the consequences of

successive policy failures. The blunders, miscalculations, and failed

leadership made by the Bush administration continue to this day.

As I stand here today, one thing is clear--we are at a crossroads.

One month ago, President Bush addressed the Nation and outlined a new

strategy in Iraq. Since that time, the merit and purpose of escalating

U.S. troops has been debated around the country. This week, the Senate

brought forth several resolutions expressing various viewpoints on the

subject.

One resolution, introduced by Senators Warner and Levin, disagrees

with the troop escalation strategy, but like all the resolutions on

Iraq, it is not binding. It cannot deter the President from sending

more troops. It cannot withdraw the troops currently in Iraq. And it

does not limit the President's power as Commander-in-Chief. That is set

in the Constitution.

However, what this resolution does is state that we, the United

States Senate, the same body that 4 years prior authorized the use of

force in Iraq, no longer has confidence in the U.S. strategy in Iraq.

Far more significantly, it sends the message to our brave fighting

men and women that although the Senate will not stop you from deploying

and engaging the enemy, we do not think you can succeed in your

mission. That is a message I refuse to send.

Therefore, I do not support the Warner-Levin resolution. Our service

members need clear direction--not mixed messages from the United States

Senate. The Armed Forces need support, both materially and morally,

from the policymakers who sent them into combat. Ambiguity has no place

in our strategy or operations in Iraq.

My opposition to this resolution, however, should not be confused

with blind support of the President's policy. I have grave concerns and

serious doubts about the future of Iraq and what role the United States

will play there. As we scrutinize the new strategy put forth by the

President, numerous and troubling questions arise about the future of

U.S. involvement.

Should we put more of our servicemembers in harm's way?

Is the number of troops in the surge enough? Or do we need more?

Is it too late to recover and should we just cut our losses and begin

to withdraw our troops?

If we did withdraw, what would be the cost?

American prestige?

An unleashing of transnational terrorism?

The establishment of Iran as the dominant force in the Middle East?

Will the Iraqi government step up to help secure the country? Or will

sending more troops only delay Iraq's government from taking more

responsibility?

The questions could go on and on. In the words of Winston Churchill

who once said, ``You ask, what is our policy? You ask, what is our

aim?'' I believe there are three fundamental questions that must be

answered before moving forward:

What is our goal in Iraq? How do we measure success? Just stating

that success is the establishment of a democratic and secure government

in Iraq is too broad a definition. It represents an endless engagement

for the U.S. We need more definable, measurable objectives. That is a

basic principle of war.

How do we achieve it? What is our strategy? Not just our military

strategy, but our overall strategy involving military, political,

economic, and social components.

And is this new plan set forth by the President a viable option? Is

it a rational strategy that will lead to achieving our objectives,

which will in turn lead to success in Iraq?

When combat operations began, our goal was straightforward--to enable

Iraq to be stable, unified, and democratic, able to provide for its own

security, a partner in the global war on terror, and a model for reform

In the Middle East.

Four years later, the country has descended into chaos. While the

formal political framework for a democratic government has advanced,

insurgent and sectarian violence has increased and become more

widespread. Is it still plausible to believe that the U. S. can unify

this country so that it will be able to sustain a viable democratic

government?

We are fighting an insurgency in Iraq. American forces and the Iraqi

people have the same enemies--the Shiite, Sunni, and al-Qaida

terrorists, illegal militias, Iranian agents, and Saddam loyalists who

stand between the Iraqi people and their future as a free nation.

Only through a combination of military force, political dialogue,

economic development and reform, and increased security for the

population will we be able to restore peace. Therefore, we are now

confronted with this question: How . will the United States reverse

Iraq's steady decline into sectarian and radical religious chaos and

bring stability to violence-torn parts of the country?

In the announcement of an imminent deployment of 21,500 additional

U.S. servicemembers to Iraq, the Bush administration radically shifted

its Iraq policy.

By increasing the amount of ``boots on the ground,'' many of the

basic tenets of the President's Iraq strategy thus far have been

repudiated--in particular, that political progress would eventually

suppress the violence. The question now becomes, will the increase in

our armed forces in Baghdad help stabilize the country and stop the

spiral into a civil war, or is it too late?

We have entered into a quagmire, and there is no easy exit. This is

not a war that will be won overnight and it is dangerous to believe

that if we set an artificial time line to withdraw troops that the

terrorist violence would not follow us home.

The consequence of failure in Iraq is the strengthening and growth of

radical extremists who will use the country as a safe haven for their

terrorist organizations to threaten the safety and security of the

United States and the entire free world.

No one appears to have the answer to the calamity that is the current

state of affairs in Iraq.

Even those outspoken detractors of the Bush plan do not offer

practical alternatives. Cutting and running is not an option, not for

the United States. Even the appearance of doing so under another name

is unacceptable, I believe, at any level. It is clear, though, that

things cannot continue forward on this path. The administration and the

Congress must find a viable strategy for U.S. involvement in Iraq.

I will not stand before you, Madam President, and assert that the

Bush plan is not without flaws, nor will I state I am completely

confident an additional 21,500 troops will turn the war around, will

stabilize Baghdad. We will know that answer soon enough, all of us. But

what I do know is this: When you vote to send troops into combat, it

becomes your responsibility to ensure their mission is clearly defined,

they have realistic military objectives, and they have the best

equipment to achieve these goals.

As Congress debates the President's plan--and we will--as new ideas

and strategies, perhaps new resolutions are brought forward, one thing,

I submit, must remain constant: the support we give our soldiers, our

service members around the world in harm's way.

I acknowledge there are different views within Congress about the way

forward in Iraq, but Congress, in my judgment, should never let

political infighting lead to bartering for bullets. Cutting off funding

for our troops or even under any kind of name or guise should never be

an option. The members of the U.S. Armed Forces willingly face grave

dangers for each and every one of us. They have bravely faced sometimes

an unknown enemy and have done everything that has been asked of them.

Abandoning our servicemembers, our soldiers, hampering their ability to

fight or cutting off funds for necessary military equipment or supplies

cannot be an alternative, in my judgment. We should never take any

action that will endanger our Armed Forces fighting in combat.

No one, I believe, wants to bring our troops safely home more than I

do or you do, Madam President. Yet while many oppose sending more

troops, no one in Congress has yet proposed an alternative that allows

Iraq to stabilize. Therefore, the last question I pose to the Senate

is: Why is no one looking

for a way to win as opposed to simply a way out? This should be part of

the debate in the few weeks ahead.