Mr. President, as we reflect on the Presidency of George

W. Bush, there were moments of high drama. Certainly, the moment of

highest drama in my recollection was when the President visited the

site of the 9/11 attack. When he went to New York and walked through

the smoke-filled rubble with the firefighters and the workmen still

digging through, it was a moment that I am sure will endure. It will be

remembered.

If you had to then select another moment in his Presidency that will

be remembered, it was a moment 3 years ago today when the President of

the United States boarded a Naval fighter plane and flew to land on the

deck of USS Abraham Lincoln.

It was a time when America wasn't certain about what had happened in

Iraq. We had launched an invasion. Saddam Hussein had been deposed.

There were still a lot of questions about the future of Iraq and what

would happen in that country.

The President of the United States came to that aircraft carrier on

that day, and as he landed and spoke to those who were assembled,

behind him was a banner which read ``Mission Accomplished.'' It was on

May 1, 2003, 3 years ago

That was the speech of the President of the United States 3 years ago

today.

Since the President made that speech, this is the grim record. Since

that day, over the last 3 years, 2,262 Americans have been killed and

17,202 Americans have been wounded.

This occurred after the President announced to the world that our

mission was accomplished.

As we gather today to mark the third anniversary of that Presidential

statement, war continues with no end in sight, and 2,401 of our best

and bravest soldiers have given their lives. I have called many of

those families from Illinois. I have attended some of the funerals. I

know the lives of those families will never be the same. They have

given so much to this country. We thank them. We will continue to thank

them over and over again. We thank the men and women in uniform for

continuing to stand and fight to defend this country and its values.

They represent the very best. We should never forget that.

But we now know that within their ranks--even at the highest levels--

there have been serious concerns about this administration and its

strategy in Iraq.

Three years after President Bush's statement on that carrier that our

mission was accomplished, several leading generals, men who served

under the President at that time, men under his command, men who were

responsible for the lives of thousands of soldiers and marines, now

retired, in civilian status, have stepped forward. What have they said?

Retired LTG Gregory Newbold, the three-star Marine Corps general who

served as the Nation's top operations officer before the invasion of

Iraq, recently joined a number of his former colleagues and said:

General Newbold is joined in this call for change by GEN Anthony

Zinni; MG Paul D. Eaton; MG John Batiste; MG Charles Swannack, Jr.; and

MG John Riggs, all retired.

If you look at the resumes of these men, you will find the very best

in service to our country. General Eaton, who headed up training for

the Iraqi military from 2003 to 2004--what did he say?

General Swannack, former commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, one

of the most storied and honored divisions in American military

history--here is what he said:

These generals are calling for change at the highest level. How many

times during the course of this war when the President was questioned

about his military strategy did he say: I defer to the generals; I

defer to the military professionals. This will not be a political

decision.

That is the right response. But what would he now say when these six

men, many of whom served under his command, have stepped forward and

said that the plan for this war is so wrong and that the man executing

that plan as Secretary of Defense is not the right person for that job?

I have said publicly, and I will repeat it. I believe Secretary

Rumsfeld, for the good of this Nation, should leave as Secretary of

Defense. I believe this for the same reason these generals do. I do not

believe he can lead us to the right conclusion in Iraq, and we will pay

a heavy price if we do not acknowledge that.

As General Zinni has said, staying the course in Iraq sends us right

over Niagara Falls. We have to change the course. We have to understand

why change is imperative. It is worth taking a few minutes to

understand how we have reached this point some 3 years after President

Bush told the world our mission was accomplished.

Recently, Secretary of State Rice stated the United States has made

thousands of ``tactical errors.'' Secretary Rumsfeld challenged her,

and said: ``I don't know what she is talking about.''

She was right. The administration has made numerous and tragically

costly mistakes in Iraq. Think about it. The decision to invade without

allies--with only the United Kingdom as a major force by our side, and

many other countries sending smaller forces, we went in virtually

alone. It was a strategic misjudgement that has left us today carrying

the military and financial burdens in Iraq.

Before us on the floor of the Senate is another spending bill for

Iraq--this one over $100 billion. The total no one can guess, but $320

billion so far, more than $2 billion a week.

My situation is like some in the Senate. I voted against the use-of-

force resolution for the war in Iraq--23 of us did, 1 Republican and 22

Democrats on that October night in 2002. But I said from my memory of

what happened in Vietnam, as I tried my best to appreciate what our

soldiers faced, that I would vote for every penny that this President

asked for to wage this war so that the soldiers would always have what

they needed to win and come home safely. And I have done that. I will

continue to do that.

When my critics ask: How can you be against the war and vote to fund

it? The question comes down to something very basic from where I am

standing. If it were my son or daughter serving in uniform in that

country, I would want them to have everything to come home safely, even

if I bitterly disagreed with the administration's policy that sent them

into this war.

We have 132,000 soldiers in Iraq today. Our combined allies have

24,000, some of whom are in Kuwait. Mr. President, 2,401 Americans have

died. That is more than 10 times the losses that have been suffered by

the rest of the so-called Coalition of the Willing.

This record-setting supplemental bill that we take up this week in

the Senate will bring the cost of U.S. operations in Iraq to $280

billion. For now, as I have said: I am going to vote for it. But before

this Congress continues to fund, we have to ask hard questions.

If this is going to be a routine vote for the so-called emergency

supplemental bill, if this is going to be routine to the point where we

don't even question the policies and strategies of the war that we are

voting for, then we have failed in our responsibilities as Senators.

On February 25, 2003, the Army Chief of Staff, GEN Eric Shinseki,

testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

General Shinseki stated, in an invasion of Iraq, that ``any postwar

occupying force would have to be big enough to maintain safety in a

country with ethnic tensions that could lead to other problems.''

General Shinseki did not get the 300,000 or 400,000 troops that he

and many others thought would be needed nor did we get the allies.

General Shinseki, for his candor and honesty, was replaced in his

command. This administration was not about to stand

still for someone in uniform telling them the stark, honest truth, that

without enough soldiers the ones we sent would be in danger.

And just as Economic Adviser Larry Lindsay was fired for predicting

the war would cost $100 to $200 billion at a time the administration

said it might not cost anything because Iraqi oil would pay for it.

That was Mr. Wolfowitz who made that statement. The fact is, they were

right, the critics were wrong, and we have suffered as a result.

There was a failure by the leaders in our Government to see this

insurgency that came about in Iraq, that endangered our soldiers and

destabilized that country for so long.

When Secretary Rumsfeld was asked about the reaction of the

insurgents and the uncertainty on the ground, he said:

In fact, the looting was the start of the postinvasion violence that

has claimed 94 percent of the American lives lost in Iraq.

Secretary Rumsfeld also signed off on another critical strategic

misjudgment. The decision after the invasion to immediately disband the

Iraqi Army made it easier for the insurgency.

We remember what happened when the Secretary went to Iraq in a

surprise visit. Soldiers greeted him. He took questions. The Tennessee

guardsman asked: Mr. Secretary, why do I have to dig through the dump

to find pieces of metal to put in my humvee to protect me and my fellow

soldiers? Why don't we have modern equipment to protect us on the

ground? The Secretary was at a loss for words. He was embarrassed.

America should have been embarrassed to send our soldiers into battle

without the equipment they needed.

Since the beginning of the war, a troubling pattern has emerged.

Under Mr. Rumsfeld's leadership, the Pentagon has been very slow to

respond to the needs of our troops in the field.

In December 2003, LTG Ricardo Sanchez identified critical shortages

and protective equipment for our troops and lack of spare parts for

combat equipment, providing proof our soldiers were not adequately

supplied.

By mid-2004, a furor broke out when reports reached Washington, DC,

that many humvee vehicles in Iraq did not have armor, and American

soldiers and Marines using them were being maimed and killed by IEDs as

a result.

Congress flooded Defense budgets with funding for vehicle armor to

replace or improve inadequately protected vehicles. Even after news

coverage of this lack of planning forced Secretary Rumsfeld to

accelerate production of the armor, the Pentagon missed at least three

self-imposed deadlines to fully field armor all of our troops--this

after the President told us our mission had been accomplished.

A defining moment for Secretary Rumsfeld was when that Tennessee

guardsman challenged him.

That is our Secretary of Defense, speaking of the Army he had, not

the Army he wanted.

Let me remind everyone the decision to invade was the decision of the

United States of America. We picked the date. We picked the time. We

established when readiness would be adequate. And sadly, it was not.

That conversation with the guardsman from Tennessee revealed another

destructive tendency. Secretary Rumsfeld has seemingly forgotten about

the tremendous role our Guard and Reserve have played in this war and

must be prepared to play at home. The condition of the gear and

equipment from our Guard and Reserve continues to rapidly deteriorate.

Last week, I went to the Illinois National Guard Camp Lincoln in

Springfield, meeting with the officers and asking them about equipment.

Eighty percent of their men and women and units have been activated in

Iraq. They have left behind wornout, damaged, and destroyed equipment,

obviously, came back empty-handed, and now do not have the fundamental

equipment they need to train the guardsman to be able to respond to

domestic emergencies in my home State of Illinois. Our situation is not

unique. Across the United States, Guard and Reserve have only 34

percent of the equipment they need in the United States.

The true cost of this war is not just in the lives and the injuries

and the budgets but the fact that we have left our military, our Guard

and Reserve, ill equipped, unprepared, for the next challenge. That is

a sad condemnation of an administration that did not think through this

commitment, that did not understand that mission would not truly be

accomplished for years and years after the President made that claim.

As a result of ``going to war with the Army you have,'' and

inadequate logistical plans, our Army and Marine units on the ground in

Iraq are continuing to struggle with repairing, rebuilding, and

replacing equipment used by up to 3 years of sustained effort.

What excuse is there for that, that we sent our Army, our Marines,

all of the men and women in uniform, over to this war without the

proper equipment?

The failures on the part of the Secretary of Defense to bring a large

enough occupation force to ensure the force was properly equipped or to

plan for the emergency of full-scale insurgency against United States

represents strategic errors of great significance. The strategic

blindness continues today.

As I said, at least Secretary Rice acknowledges errors were made.

After 3 years of war, Secretary Rumsfeld does not know what the

Secretary of State is talking about when she says that thousands of

mistakes were made.

We need someone who can recognize the reality before him and

acknowledge that we need to change course in Iraq.

Last fall, the Senate, by a vote of 79 to 19, declared calendar year

2006 should be a period of significant transition to full Iraqi

sovereignty, with Iraqi security forces taking the lead for the

security of a free and sovereign Iraq, thereby creating the conditions

for the phased redeployment of U.S. forces.

What does that mean? It is time for the Iraqis to stand and govern

their own nation. It is time for the Iraqi people to stand and defend

their own nation. How many years have we been promised that Iraqi

soldiers and police were this close to replacing American soldiers? You

have a right to be skeptical because we have yet to see the first

American soldier replaced by an Iraqi soldier taking their place,

standing guard for their own country.

Secretary Rumsfeld has not been able to create the conditions that

will allow for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq. We are a long way

from accomplishing our mission.

Early this month, Congress received the first report from the Bush

administration required by the year of transition amendment. The

administration report offers the same ideological blind spots that led

to the ``mission accomplished'' claim in 2003. It shows the same lack

of vision that failed to predict insurgency. There are no mentions of

militia. There is no analysis of the dangers of civil war. They still

see only what they want to see.

I believe Secretary Rumsfeld should resign. But I in no way hold him

solely responsible for the decisions on Iraq. After all, he works for

the Commander in Chief, the President of the United States.

In order to find our way out of this disastrous mess this

administration has made in Iraq, the President clearly needs new

leadership in Defense. And that is not just my opinion. It is the

opinion of these retired generals--men who have given their lives to

this country, men whose hearts were broken as they watched their

soldiers and marines killed in battle, men who visited these veterans

in the hospitals, men who reflected on where we are today

and how we reached it and came to the same conclusion.

We need a new direction. We need new leadership. We need to have

someone in the Department of Defense and a strategy that will lead to

our troops coming home, the sooner the better.