Mr. President, I know it is probably appropriate to speak

of our colleagues, and I will do that on the record. I rise tonight,

however, to speak about a subject heavy on my mind. It is the subject

of the war in Iraq.

I have never worn the uniform of my country. I am not a soldier or a

veteran. I regret that fact. It is one of the regrets of my life. But I

am a student of history, particularly military history, and it is that

perspective which I brought to the Senate 10 years ago as a newly

elected Member of this Chamber.

When we came to the vote on Iraq, it was an issue of great moment for

me. No issue is more difficult to vote on than war and peace, because

it involves the lives of our soldiers, our young men and women. It

involves the expenditure of our treasure, putting on the line the

prestige of our country. It is not a vote taken lightly. I have tried

to be a good soldier in this Chamber. I have tried to support our

President, believing at the time of the vote on the war in Iraq that we

had been given good intelligence and knowing that Saddam Hussein was a

menace to the world, a brutal dictator, a tyrant by any standard, and

one who threatened our country in many different ways, through the

financing and fomenting of terrorism. For those reasons and believing

that we would find weapons of mass destruction, I voted aye.

I have been rather silent on this question ever since. I have been

rather quiet because, when I was visiting Oregon troops in Kirkuk in

the Kurdish area, the soldiers said to me: Senator, don't tell me you

support the troops and not our mission. That gave me pause. But since

that time, there have been 2,899 American casualties. There have been

over 22,000 American men and women wounded. There has been an

expenditure of $290 billion a figure that approaches the expenditure we

have every year on an issue as important as Medicare. We have paid a

price in blood and treasure that is beyond calculation by my

estimation.

Now, as I witness the slow undoing of our efforts there, I rise to

speak from my heart. I was greatly disturbed recently to read a comment

by a man I admire in history, one Winston Churchill, who after the

British mandate extended to the peoples of Iraq for 5 years, wrote to

David Lloyd George, Prime Minister of England:

When I read that, I thought, not much has changed. We have to learn

the lessons of history and sometimes they are painful because we have

made mistakes.

Even though I have not worn the uniform of my country, I, with other

colleagues here, love this Nation. I came into politics because I

believed in some things. I am unusually proud of the fact of our recent

history, the history of our Nation since my own birth. At the end of

the Second World War, there were 15 nations on earth that could be

counted as democracies that you and I would recognize. Today there are

150 nations on earth that are democratic and free. That would not have

happened had the United States been insular and returned to our

isolationist roots, had we laid down the mantle of world leadership,

had we not seen the importance of propounding and encouraging the

spread of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and the values of

our Bill of Rights. It is a better world because of the United States

of America, and the price we have paid is one of blood and treasure.

Now we come to a great crossroads. A commission has just done some, I

suppose, good work. I am still evaluating it. I welcome any ideas now

because where we are leaves me feeling much like Churchill, that we are

paying the price to sit on a mountain that is little more than a

volcano of ingratitude.

Yet as I feel that, I remember the pride I felt when the statue of

Saddam Hussein came down. I remember the thrill I felt when three times

Iraqis risked their own lives to vote democratically in a way that was

internationally verifiable as well as legitimate and important. Now all

of those memories seem much like ashes to me.

The Iraq Study Group has given us some ideas. I don't know if they

are good or not. It does seem to me that it is a recipe for retreat. It

is not cut and run, but it is cut and walk. I don't know that that is

any more honorable than cutting and running, because cutting and

walking involves greater expenditure of our treasure, greater loss of

American lives.

Many things have been attributed to George Bush. I have heard him on

this floor blamed for every ill, even the weather. But I do not believe

him to be a liar. I do not believe him to be a traitor, nor do I

believe all the bravado and the statements and the accusations made

against him. I believe him to be a very idealistic man. I believe him

to have a stubborn backbone. He is not guilty of perfidy, but I do

believe he is guilty of believing bad intelligence and giving us the

same.

I can't tell you how devastated I was to learn that in fact we were

not going to find weapons of mass destruction. But remembering the

words of the soldier--don't tell me you support the troops but you

don't support my mission--I felt the duty to continue my support. Yet I

believe the President is guilty of trying to win a short war and not

understanding fully the nature of the ancient hatreds of the Middle

East. Iraq is a European creation. At the Treaty of Versailles, the

victorious powers put together Kurdish, Sunni, and Shia tribes that had

been killing each other for time immemorial. I would like to think

there is an Iraqi identity. I would like to remember the purple fingers

raised high. But we can not want democracy for Iraq more than they want

it for themselves. And what I find now is that our tactics there have

failed.

Again, I am not a soldier, but I do know something about military

history. And what that tells me is when you are engaged in a war of

insurgency, you can't clear and leave. With few exceptions, throughout

Iraq that is what

we have done. To fight an insurgency often takes a decade or more. It

takes more troops than we have committed. It takes clearing, holding,

and building so that the people there see the value of what we are

doing. They become the source of intelligence, and they weed out the

insurgents. But we have not cleared and held and built. We have cleared

and left, and the insurgents have come back.

I, for one, am at the end of my rope when it comes to supporting a

policy that has our soldiers patrolling the same streets in the same

way, being blown up by the same bombs day after day. That is absurd. It

may even be criminal. I cannot support that anymore. I believe we need

to figure out how to fight the war on terror and to do it right. So

either we clear and hold and build, or let's go home.

There are no good options, as the Iraq Study Group has mentioned in

their report. I am not sure cutting and walking is any better. I have

little confidence that the Syrians and the Iranians are going to be

serious about helping us to build a stable and democratic Iraq. I am at

a crossroads as well. I want my constituents to know what is in my

heart, what has guided my votes.

What will continue to guide the way I vote is simply this: I do not

believe we can retreat from the greater war on terror. Iraq is a

battlefield in that larger war. But I do believe we need a presence

there on the near horizon at least that allows us to provide

intelligence, interdiction, logistics, but mostly a presence to say to

the murderers that come across the border: We are here, and we will

deal with you. But we have no business being a policeman in someone

else's civil war.

I welcome the Iraq Study Group's report, but if we are ultimately

going to retreat, I would rather do it sooner than later. I am looking

for answers, but the current course is unacceptable to this Senator. I

suppose if the President is guilty of one other thing, I find it also

in the words of Winston Churchill.

That is a lesson we are learning again. I am afraid, rather than

leveling with the American people and saying this was going to be a

decade-long conflict because of the angst and hatred that exists in

that part of the world, that we tried to win it with too few troops in

too fast a time. Lest anyone thinks I believe we have failed

militarily, please understand I believe when President Bush stood in

front of ``mission accomplished'' on an aircraft carrier that, in

purely military terms, the mission was accomplished in the wars in

Afghanistan and Iraq. But winning a battle, winning a war, is different

than winning a peace.

We were not prepared to win the peace by clearing, holding, and

building. You don't do that fast and you don't do it with too few

troops. I believe now that we must either determine to do that, or we

must redeploy in a way that allows us to continue to prosecute the

larger war on terror. It will not be pretty. We will pay a price in

world opinion. But I, for one, am tired of paying the price of 10 or

more of our troops dying a day. So let's cut and run, or cut and walk,

or let us fight the war on terror more intelligently than we have,

because we have fought this war in a very lamentable way.

Those are my feelings. I regret them. I would have never voted for

this conflict had I reason to believe that the intelligence we had was

not accurate. It was not accurate, but that is history. Now we must

find a way to make the best of a terrible situation, at a minimum of

loss of life for our brave fighting men and women. So I will be looking

for every opportunity to clear, build, hold, and win or how to bring

our troops home.