Mr. President, as a

member of the Senate Intelligence

Committee, I firmly believe that the

issue of Iraq is not about politics. It’s

about national security. We know that

for at least 20 years, Saddam Hussein

has aggressively and obsessively

sought weapons of mass destruction

through every means available. We

know that he has chemical and biological

weapons today. He has used them in

the past, and he is doing everything he

can to build more. Each day he inches

closer to his longtime goal of nuclear

capability—a capability that could be

less than a year away.

I believe that Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi

regime represents a clear threat to the

United States, to our allies, to our interests

around the world, and to the

values of freedom and democracy we

hold dear.

Saddam has proven his willingness to

act irrationally and brutally against

his neighbors and against his own people.

Iraqi’s destructive capacity has the

potential to throw the entire Middle

East into chaos, and poses a mortal

threat to our vital ally, Israel.

What’s more, the terrorist threat

against America is all too clear. Thousands

of terrorist operatives around

the world would pay anything to get

their hands on Saddam’s arsenal, and

there is every possibility that he could

turn his weapons over to these terrorists.

No one can doubt that if the terrorists

of September 11 had had weapons

of mass destruction, they would

have used them. On September 12, 2002,

we can hardly ignore the terrorist

threat, and the serious danger that

Saddam would allow his arsenal to be

used in aid of terror.

Iraq has continued to develop its arsenal

in definance of the collective will

of the international community, as expressed

through the United Nations Security

Council. It is violating the

terms of the cease-fire that ended the

Gulf War and ignoring as many as 16

U.N. Security Council resolutions—including

11 resolutions concerning Iraq’s

efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction.

These U.N. resolutions are not unilateral

American demands. They involve

obligations Iraq has undertaken

to the international community. By ignoring

them. Saddam Hussein is undermining

the credibility of the United

Nations, openly violating international

law, and making a mockery of the very

idea of international collective action

which is so important to the United

States and our allies.

The time has come for decisive action.

With our allies, we must do whatever

is necessary to guard against the

threat posed by an Iraq armed with

weapons of mass destruction, and

under the thumb of Saddam Hussein.

The United States must lead an international

effort to remove the regime of

Saddam Hussein and to assure that

Iraq fulfills its obligations to the international

community.

This is not an easy decision, and its

carries many risks. It will also carry

costs, certainly in resources, and possibly

in lives. After careful consideration,

I believe that the risk of inaction

is far greater than the risk of action.

As we set out on this course, we must

be as conscious of our special responsibility

as we are confident in the

rightness of our cause.

The United States has a special role

of leadership in the international community.

As America and its allies move

down this path, we must do so in a way

that preserves the legitimacy of our actions,

enhances international consensus,

and strengthens our global

leadership.

First, this means making the strongest

possible case to the American people

about the danger Saddam poses.

Months of mixed messages, high-level

speculation and news-leaks about possible

military plans have caused widespread

concern among many Americans

and around the world.

I am encouraged that the President

has overruled some of his advisors and

decided to ask for the support of Congress.

From the support of Congress,

this effort will derive even greater and

more enduring strength.

Second, the Administration must do

as much as possible to rally the support

of the international community

under the mandate of the United Nations

Security Council. We should tap

into the strengths of existing alliances

like NATO to enforce such a mandate.

And let me be clear: America’s allies

deserve more than just token consultation.

The Bush administration must

make a full-court press to rally global

support, much like the impressive effort

President Bush’s father made to

rally the first international coalition

against Saddam in the fall of 1990. If

they do, I believe they will succeed.

If, however, the United Nations Security

Council is prevented from supporting

this effort, then we must act

with as many allies as possible to ensure

that Iraq meets its obligations to

existing Security Council resolutions.

After all, that’s what the U.S. and its

NATO allies did during the 1999 war in

Kosovo, when a U.N. Security Council

resolution was impossible.

Third, we must be honest with the

American people about the extraordinary

commitment this task entails.

It is likely to cost us much in the

short-term, and it is certain to demand

our attention and commitment for the

long-haul. We have to show the world

that we are prepared to do what it

takes to help rebuild a post-Saddam

Iraq and give the long-suffering Iraqi

people the chance to live under freedom.

Working with our allies, we have to

be prepared to deal with the consequences

of success—helping to provide

security inside Iraq after Saddam

is gone, working with the various Iraqi

opposition groups in shaping a new

government, reassuring Iraq’s neighbors

about its future stability, and supporting

the Iraqi people as they rebuild

their lives. This is a massive undertaking,

and we must pursue it with no

illusions.

Ensuring that Iraq complies with its

commitments to the international

community is the mission of the moment.

Rebuilding Iraq and helping it

evolve into a democracy at peace with

itself and its neighbors will be the mission

of many years.

Unfortunately, the administration’s

record to date gives me cause for concern.

They must not make the same

mistakes in post-Saddam Iraq that

they are making in post-Taliban Afghanistan,

where they have been dangerously

slow in making the real commitment

necessary to help democracy

take root and flourish.

Finally, the administration must

show that its actions against Iraq are

part of a broader strategy to strengthen

American security around the

world.

We must address the most insidious

threat posed by weapons of mass destruction—

the threat that comes from

the ability of terrorists to obtain them.

We must do much more to support the

many disarmament programs already

in place to dismantle weapons and prevent

access to weapons-grade materials

in Russia and the former Soviet states;

we must fully fund Nunn-Lugar; and we

should work hard to forge international

coalition to prevent proliferation.

We must be fully and continuously

engaged to help resolve the crisis between

Israel and the Palestinians. Disengagement

was a mistake. The United

States cannot deliver peace to the parties,

but no agreement is possible without

our active involvement.

We also must have a national strategy

for energy security, working to

strengthen relationships with new suppliers

and doing more to develop alternative

sources of power.

And we must do far more to promote

democracy throughout the Arab world.

We should examine our overall engagement

in the entire region, and employ

the same kinds of tools that we used to

win the battle of ideas fought during

the Cold War, from vigorous public diplomacy

to assistance for democratic

reform at the grassroots.

The path of confronting Saddam is

full of hazards. But the path of inaction

is far more dangerous. This week,

a week where we remember the sacrifice

of thousands of innocent Americans

made on 9/11, the choice could not

be starker. Had we known that such attacks

were imminent, we surely would

have used every means at our disposal

to prevent them and take out the plotters.

We cannot wait for such a terrible

event—or, if weapons of mass destruction

are used, one far worse—to address

the clear and present danger posed by

Saddam Hussein’s Iraq.