Mr. President, on the

heels of passing a much-needed pay and

benefits increase for the men and

women who give up their freedom to

serve us in our armed services, I want

to direct my colleagues’ attention to

one longstanding military mission

these men and women have been assigned.

That is the mission of containing

the threat of Saddam Hussein in

Iraq.

Mr. President, I do this for a couple

of reasons. First is that I have argued

for a stronger military operation in

Iraq. Indeed, I have argued to change

the objective from containment to replacement.

And oftentimes people

come back and say, well, if we do that,

we will risk lives.

I would like to describe to my colleagues—

in fact, we have a military operation

going on today, have had since

1991; and this military operation is

costing us dearly both in lives and in

money.

Mr. President, last Tuesday I had the

opportunity to give a speech to the cadets

at the Air Force Academy in Colorado

Springs and they asked me to

speak on patriotism, for which I was

only too anxious to oblige.

I talked to them about something

that I think is causing the decline in

enrollment—in addition to the inadequate

pay and retirement benefits—

and that is that Americans are less

willing to volunteer for service in our

Armed Forces as a consequence, in my

judgment, of our not doing enough to

tell them —especially our younger citizens—

the stories of heroism which are

being written every single day by the

brave men and women who wear the

uniform of one of our services. Instead

of role models of people who have given

themselves to a higher cause, Mr.

President, unfortunately our young

people are being told an increasing

number of stories, especially on television,

of self-gratification and

indulgency. It is no wonder as a consequence

that a patriotic decision to

serve seems like a nonmainstream

choice.

Before I gave my speech at the Academy,

the superintendent warned me I

needed to remember how young my audience

was. ‘‘Half your audience,’’ he

said, ‘‘wasn’t even 10 years of age when

Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in

1990.’’ Mr. President, I must tell you

that gave me some pause because that

seemed like yesterday that happened,

but, in fact, a great deal of time has expired

since then.

For me, the statement was more

than just a reminder to be careful what

language I used when talking to these

young people, but also a wakeup call

not to take for granted the military

mission that we have in place in Iraq

today. It is a dangerous military operation.

It is a military operation that

costs us a great deal of money, and I

hazard a guess that most of us who

have looked at the objective of containing

Saddam Hussein would say

that the mission is dangerously close

to unraveling.

This military strategy began in August

1990 when Saddam Hussein invaded

Kuwait. In response to this active

aggression, the United States,

under President Bush’s leadership, assembled

and led an international coalition

of forces against Iraq. It was a

costly war, both in terms of our financial

commitment but also in terms of

the human cost to the more than

540,000 men and women in our military

forces deployed to the Persian Gulf.

Sixty billion dollars was spent prosecuting

the war, but this does not compare

to the price paid by 389 American

families who lost loved ones in Operation

Desert Storm.

At the end of the war, most Americans

assumed our military commitment

to Iraq would come to an end.

After all, the war had been fought. We

had been victorious. Saddam Hussein

had sued for peace. It was time to bring

home the troops. But almost from the

beginning, Saddam Hussein refused to

abide by the terms of the cease-fire

agreements his government had signed.

From violating the no-fly zones to obstructing

the work of weapons inspectors

to provoking troop deployments,

Iraq’s continual challenges and our policy

of containment forced us to maintain

a very strong military presence in

the region. With each crisis generated

by the Iraqi regime, the United States

and our allies responded to the deployment

of more troops and at times with

the use of military force. While it is

difficult to quantify the monetary cost

of the numerous redeployments and

military confrontations that have

taken place with Iraq over the last 8

years, it is even more difficult to quantify

the effect these deployments have

had on our troops. How many families

have had to be separated for months at

a time? What has been the cost in morale

for troops deployed to the Desert?

We must also examine the broader

costs of our military strategy in Iraq.

The continual need for large numbers

of American troops in Saudi Arabia has

created a strong sense of resentment

throughout the Arab world, and it has

also increased the danger of terrorist

acts against Americans.

Again, I have urged a different military

strategy with a different objective

in the past. The reason I bring this

story to the floor, Mr. President, is oftentimes

people will say, ‘‘Americans

don’t want to risk the lives of our soldiers,

sailors, airmen and marines in a

military operation.’’ In 1996, 19 Americans

were killed in the Khobar Towers

bombing and they died as a result of

the anger directed at the American

military presence in the gulf. Indeed,

the terrorist bombings of U.S. Embassies

in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam,

in which 12 Americans were

killed, were directed by Osama bin

Laden, a man who had been stripped of

his Saudi citizenship for financing Islamic

militants in Algeria, Egypt, and

Saudi Arabia. Today, bin Laden remains

at large and remains a significant

threat not just to people of the

world but especially to American citizens

around the world. The reason he is

a threat and the reason he has killed

not just Americans but Kenyans is we

are deploying a military operation in

Saudi Arabia. It is our presence that he

objects to. It is our presence and our

military strategy that is being met

with his terrorist activities.

Again, I raise these points because I

think we have a tendency to forget the

price that we paid for our policy in

Iraq. We forget the price that we are

paying today for our policy in Iraq.

This policy has been described as containment.

It has been expensive and, in

my judgment, it has failed. Recent

events may indicate that there is a

light at the end of the tunnel. The

Iraqi people may be closer to their

freedom than at any time in years.

America must be prepared for sudden

change in that country.

The Iraqi people are suffering. The

Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein is

among the most brutal and repressive

in the world. Americans can be proud

of the leading role we are playing in

confronting this dictatorship. Last fall

President Clinton and Congress took a

big step towards delegitimizing Saddam

by passing and signing the Iraqi

Liberation Act. The world was placed

on notice that America wanted to see

Saddam’s dictatorship gone and would

work with democratic opposition

groups to attain that goal.

The administration and our British

allies took another big step in December

with the Desert Fox airstrikes. By

attacking the underpinnings of

Saddam’s power, the Special Republican

Guards and the intelligence services,

Operation Desert Fox reduced

Saddam’s ability to terrorize his people

and showed Iraqis we and our allies

were truly opposed to Saddam in a way

previous air campaigns had not done.

Saddam responded to Desert Fox by

undertaking regular violations of the

northern and southern no-fly zones,

trying to entice allied aircraft into air

defense missile ambushes. The allied

counter has been highly effective.

Rather than simply chasing retreating

Iraqi aircraft, United States and allied

warplanes have been attacking the

Iraqi air defense missile and radar and

communication sites, which would support

such ambushes. Almost every day

so far in 1999 we have attacked some

Iraqi air defense installation in response

to a no-fly zone violation. The

effectiveness and readiness of Saddam’s

air defense forces decline daily. Equally

important, the complete impotence

of Saddam’s military relative to the allies

is made plain to all Iraqis. In military

terms, the Iraqi regime has never

looked weaker.

Last weekend, the world saw signs of

a political rally to match the decline of

Iraq’s military. The Grand Ayatollah

of the Shiites, the spiritual leader of 65

percent of Iraqis who are Shiite Muslims,

was murdered Thursday night

with two of his sons. According to press

reports, the Grand Ayatollah had reportedly

opposed the regime’s directive

to all Muslims that they pray at home

rather than at Friday services in

mosques. Opposition sources said the

Grand Ayatollah had preached against

the regime and had blamed it for the

misery of Iraqis. Perhaps for these reasons,

Shiite Muslim Iraqis suspected

the government of the crime and took

to the streets in Baghdad and in several

southern cities.

The Iraqi opposition groups claim

scores, perhaps hundreds, of Iraqis were

killed in the government’s harsh response.

Two other Shiite leaders of

international reputation have also

been mysteriously murdered in southern

Iraq within the last year. The murder

of the Grand Ayatollah, coming on

these earlier murders and in the background

of longstanding Shiite resistance

to Saddam’s regime, sparked demonstrations

and violent government responses

in Baghdad and several other

cities, according to opposition reports.

By Sunday night, the regime had apparently

quelled the demonstrations.

The human cost and the extent of continuing

Shiite hostility to Saddam’s

regime are simply not known to us, but

the episode demonstrates the Iraqi government’s

lack of legitimacy in the

eyes of its people, as well as the extent

to which Saddam would go to suppress

any opposition. The episode reveals a

weakening Iraqi regime lashing out in

an increasingly desperate effort to

maintain power. When dictatorships

act this way, it may signal that their

end is near.

But when the end comes, it may

come quickly. The question will be, Is

America prepared for the end? If we

have done our homework on the various

Iraqi opposition groups and actively

supported the groups which

qualify under the criteria set forth in

the Iraq Liberation Act, we will be well

positioned to help Iraq make the transition

to democracy. However, if we

delay full implementation of the act

and take a wait-and-see posture toward

the opposition, we should not be surprised

if our influence on events in

post-Saddam Iraq is slight. Similarly,

if we do not have humanitarian supplies

ready to be forwarded to Iraq as

soon as Saddam falls, and if we do not

have international consensus for forgiving

the debts of a post-Saddam Iraq,

we should not be surprised to see him

replaced by another hostile dictator.

Mr. President, we have a vital national

interest in Iraq’s future. The

lives of young Americans are invested

there—our honored dead from the gulf

war, as well as from the terrorist attack

on Khobar Towers. The valor of

our young warriors—now being demonstrated

daily in the skies over Iraq—

is invested there.

Tens of thousands of soldiers, sailors,

airmen and marines have spent months

of their lives on deployments to the

Persian Gulf and to Turkey in support

of the U.S. policy to contain Iraq. We

have invested billions of dollars supporting

this policy: $1.36 billion on deployments

in fiscal year 1998 alone, and

$800 million so far in fiscal year 1999.

The American people have made this

heavy investment and they have the

right to a good return—a democratic

Iraq at peace with its neighbors and

with its people, so we can bring our

troops, ships, and planes home for

good. To attain this return, we must be

ready for an internal crisis in Iraq,

which could occur sooner than we expect.

Mr. President, on later occasions, I

intend to come to the floor to describe

why I believe a policy other than containment

is necessary. I understand

there are people who are very suspicious

and very guarded in their assessments

of our success. But I ask

them merely to look at previous examples

of where the United States of

America has been successful in the face

of considerable skepticism about our

ability to get that done.

In addition, Mr. President, we have,

as I have tried to outline here, a considerable

military investment and a

risky operation going on today that

puts every single one of these men and

women, their health, safety, and wellbeing

at risk, and we should not and

dare not take that for granted.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence

of a quorum.