Mr. President, I want

to call to the attention of my colleagues

an issue that is not being

raised in the otherwise informative

presidential primary campaigns. It is

not a theoretical issue, nor is it an

issue concerning budgetary decisions.

Rather, it is an issue which sends

American pilots on combat missions almost

daily. It is an issue which

throughout the last decade has cost the

lives of hundreds of American and

thousands of soldiers and civilians of

other nationalities. It is an issue which

threatens the peace and security of

some of our closest allies, and which, if

not solved, could threaten the United

States with weapons of mass destruction.

It is an issue which starves and

hold captive twenty-two million people

in conditions of unparalleled terror of

their government. It is an issue which

we have failed to deal with decisively,

and that failure calls into question our

dedication to the freedom we prize so

highly for ourselves.

The issue is the continuing rule of

Saddam Hussein. Nine years after the

United States led a coalition to eject

Iraqi forces and liberate Kuwait, Saddam

continues to brutalize his people,

threaten his neighbors, and develop

weapons of mass destruction—earlier

versions of which he used on neighboring

states, on Israel, and on his own

people. The good news is that sanctions

have weakened his military, and his

political support base has shrunk to his

immediate family. All of mountainous

northern Iraq and large swathes of

southern Iraq are free of his control.

Nonetheless, he continues to rule the

central part of the country and, as Jim

Hoagland pointed out in today’s Washington

Post, Saddam is likely to outlast

yet another American President.

The Administration will no doubt

point to the restraining effect UN sanctions

have had on Saddam’s ability to

threaten his neighbors. In truth, his regime

would have been far more aggressive

if sanctions and the no-fly zones

guaranteed by U.S. and British airpower

had not been in effect. But in

choosing policy options against an outlaw

like Saddam, restraint is a minimal

objective.

For example, we and our allies in the

former Yugoslavia are not seeking to

restrain those accused of war crimes

during the ethnic war there; we seek to

catch them, lock them up, and get

them to The Hague for trial. Saddam

has killed far more than any of the

wanted Yugoslavs, and he keeps on

killing today. Our rhetoric, including

mine today, calls for the same response

to Saddam.

But our real policy is merely to restrain

him. The fact that the restraint

has endured nine years is what the Administration

shows as evidence of its

success. But adhering to the policy of

restraint is actually taking us farther

from our stated goals. Support for the

sanctions policy is eroding at the UN.

This, along with rising oil prices and

Iraq’s rising oil production, have made

Saddam a key global energy player

once again. In addition, Saddam has

had thirteen months to develop weapons

of mass destruction without the inhibition

imposed by outside inspections.

Now, a new inspection regime

has been voted by the Security Council.

If Iraq eventually accepts it, I presume

Dr. Blix and his new inspectors

will do their best. Yet, they will never

be as intrusive, and therefore as effective,

as UNSCOM. In sum, the restraints

which we have kept on Saddam

for nine years are loosening. He is

very close to being free of the handcuffs

in which both we and his people

have invested so much.

Restraining Saddam was always a

minimal objective. It was a way to

avoid the strategic risk many see in

the bolder objective of acting in support

of the Iraqi opposition to remove

Saddam from power and achieve democracy.

It is ironic that the minimal

objective requires the continual application

of U.S. military force, not just

for a decade, but presumably forever.

The bolder objective, once achieved,

would bring U.S. military operations

and basing in the Gulf countries to an

end. I believe Congress has recognized

the need for bold action. In passing the

Iraq Liberation Act in October 1998,

Congress expressed its frustration with

the status quo and provided resources

with which the Administration could

support the Iraqi opposition in their efforts

to remove Saddam from power.

In signing the Iraq Liberation Act,

President Clinton affirmed that U.S.

policy was not merely to restrain Saddam

but to see him replaced. Unfortunately,

the President’s policy pronouncement

has not been followed by

action. The President and Vice President

have encouraging words for Iraqis

seeking to free their country, but their

words are belied by the inaction of

their Administration. Despite unprecedented

unity, the Administration has

provided only a small proportion of

available resources to the Iraqi opposition,

and this only on superficialities

which will have no effect on opinion inside

Iraq. The countries in the region

all agree the U.S. is not serious about

supporting Saddam’s removal. If you

don’t believe me, call the ambassador

of any Middle Eastern country and ask

him or her if our actions and rhetoric

match.

If the Administration actively sought

Saddam’s replacement, our allies in

the region would know it and they

would cooperate with us. But the Administration

has not asked because the

truth is, beneath the rhetoric, we are

clinging to the old policy of restraining

Saddam. There are now signs that the

consensus for even that is fraying. I

would hate to think that the boldest

hope of our national security establishment

is that our policy will hold until

noon on January 20 of 2001.

I admit to coming late to an understanding

of the evil of the Iraqi regime

and the imperative of fighting it. After

Saddam’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, I

voted against the Gulf War resolution.

My distrust of the Bush Administration’s

statements regarding the need

for the use of force in Iraq were colored

by my own experiences in Vietnam.

But Iraq is not Vietnam. And I have

come to understand the brutality of

Saddam Hussein’s regime and the overwhelming

requirement to support the

efforts of Iraqis to replace it. I understand

the threat the regime poses to

his people, to his neighbors, and to the

rest of the world. Most of all, this is

about our commitment to freedom.

The long night of the Iraqi people

will not be ended through a policy of

merely retraining the Iraqi regime. Instead,

we must work to match our

words and our deeds to actively support

the Iraqi opposition in their effort

to remove Saddam Hussein and establish

a democratic Iraq. When the people

of Iraq obtain their freedom, it will

transform the Middle East. It will create

a new region in which brutality,

poverty, and unnecessary armaments

will be supplanted by security, prosperity,

and creative diversity.

Mr. President, this goal is within our

reach. But the difference between success

and failure in this endeavor will be

measured by our willingness to act in

support of the people of Iraq.

I yield the floor.