Mr. President, this

Tuesday we heard the President of the

United States in his State of the Union

Address once again appeal to the American

people to support sending United

States troops into a preemptive war

against Iraq. In support of his appeal,

he did not tell us anything we have not

heard before.

A majority of the American people

remain unconvinced that the United

States, only 3 months after sponsoring

a U.N. Security Council resolution calling

on Iraq to disarm, should now,

without the support of the Security

Council, abandon the U.N. inspections

process and launch a unilateral military

invasion.

On January 18, in my home State of

Vermont, over 3,000 Vermonters gathered

in front of the Vermont State

House in Montpelier, in freezing weather—

in fact, some of the coldest weather

we have had in years—to express their

opposition to a war with Iraq. It is a

privilege to represent a State whose

citizens have always been among the

most thoughtful voices and sometimes

the most outspoken voices.

Those Vermonters were of all ages

and from all walks of life. They were

not alone. Hundreds of thousands of

Americans, including many

Vermonters, traveled to Washington to

brave the subfreezing temperatures

here. And there were protests in other

cities and towns across the country.

These demonstrations convey the

growing recognition of many Americans

that the administration is preparing

to invade Iraq, despite the opposing

views of many allies and irrespective

of any decision by the U.N. Security

Council.

The situation in Iraq is not a simple

black-and-white issue. I have said this

over and over. We saw how the Reagan

administration and the former Bush

administration often facilitated and

frequently ignored Saddam Hussein’s

development of weapons of mass destruction,

until he extended his territorial

claims to Kuwait’s oil fields. We

all know there is abundant evidence

that Saddam Hussein is a deceitful,

murderous villain. No one ignores that.

Still, there are times in history when

circumstances compel us to speak out,

and this is one of those times.

Several Senators have spoken eloquently—

Senator KERRY, Senator

BIDEN, Senator KENNEDY, and others—

and I associate myself with many of

their remarks.

Mr. President, the White House and

Pentagon are fueling the belief that

war with Iraq is inevitable. That was

the President’s message in the State of

the Union Address, although no new

evidence was offered. Many in the

White House are eager, even impatient,

for war to begin. They view Iraq as the

first step in a fundamental reshaping of

the geopolitical alignment of the Middle

East. It reminds me of when I first

started serving in the Senate, and the

White House political thinkers at that

time were obsessed with theories about

falling dominos.

I, like many here, and like many in

the White House who are the most

vocal advocates of a preemptive, unilateral

invasion of Iraq, have been

blessed with never having faced military

combat.

I take to heart the wise words of my

friend, Senator CHUCK HAGEL:

These same administration officials

have also studiously avoided talking

about what is inevitable in any war—

American lives will be lost and the

lives of innocent civilians, overwhelmingly,

will be lost. People will die on

both sides. And they give short shrift

to the risks war with Iraq poses to

building broad support for peace in the

Middle East and, most important, to

our efforts to thwart international terrorism.

The saber rattling in Washington—

and the steady deployment of tens of

thousands of U.S. troops, planes, and

ships to the Persian Gulf—is causing

alarm and fear both here and abroad.

But world opinion, including so many

of our allies, is squarely in favor of exhausting

every effort to avoid war.

The people of Vermont gave me, as a

member of the Senate Armed Services

Committee in the spring of 1975, the opportunity

to cast a tie-breaking vote

against continued funding of the Vietnam

war. I recall so well how over 30

years ago, even before focus groups,

mass polling, and the hyperbole of midterm

elections, White House politics—

joined unfortunately by both parties—

not the need to protect the American

people, caused the deaths of tens of

thousands of people in that unnecessary

war in Vietnam. I am as proud of

that vote as any I have cast since—and

I have cast well over 10,000 votes in this

body—and I will bring Vermonters’

voices to the Iraq debate today.

It has been only 60 days since the

U.N. weapons inspectors returned to

Iraq. They are just reaching full capacity.

I and others here urged President

Bush to go to the United Nations and

seek a resolution calling on Iraq to disarm,

and I applauded the President

when he did that. It was one of the finest

speeches of his career, and he secured

a unanimous vote in the Security

Council for that resolution.

Now, however, the White House is

wrong to dismiss the inspections as

having failed so soon when the chief

U.N. inspector says he is expanding his

team and plans to work at least into

March. The British, French, and German

governments have all said the

U.N. should be given more time, especially

as long as the Iraqis give the inspectors

access throughout the country.

This is the type of common sense

that should be guiding our policy, not

a knee-jerk, trigger-happy approach

that alienates our friends and allies.

We should work closely with the

United Nations. We should remember

that far more of Iraq’s weapons were

discovered and destroyed by the inspectors

after the Gulf War than were destroyed

by our troops during the Gulf

War.

I have no doubt Saddam Hussein is

lying. He has lied countless times before.

He is likely hiding weapons, including

chemical and biological weapons.

The U.N. inspectors’ report leaves

little doubt of that.

The Iraqis have not explained what

happened to thousands of tons of chemical

weapons material, and other biological

munitions they had in their

possession 5 years ago. There have been

discoveries of empty chemical weapons

shells and documents they had not disclosed.

These are serious discrepancies

by a regime that is among the world’s

most dangerous, deceptive, and brutal.

There may also be other evidence of

Saddam Hussein’s deception that the

administration has not yet revealed.

But the inspectors are continuing their

work, and the results so far do not justify

abandoning the inspections process

and sending thousands of American

men and women into a war costing

hundreds of billions of dollars, that

will cost American lives, and the lives

of innocent civilians, and could trigger

a wider conflict in the Middle East,

while creating more enemies and terrorists

over the long run.

If Saddam Hussein is removed from

power, we will all celebrate. He has terrorized

the Iraqi people for decades. His

security agents have sadistically tortured,

even summarily executed, many

thousands of people. But far more is at

stake here than getting rid of Saddam

Hussein. At stake is the justification

for sending Americans into war absent

an imminent threat to the security of

the United States, the most powerful

Nation on Earth.

We have heard a lot of strong rhetoric,

but we have not heard a compelling

case that the use of military force

is the only alternative to disarm Iraq.

Last year, our President pointed to

‘‘evidence’’ that Iraq was developing

nuclear weapons. Today, that evidence

seems to be disappearing. Despite a

rush to judgment by some White House

officials, U.S. intelligence experts remain

deeply divided on this question.

The International Atomic Energy

Agency says there is no evidence that

Iraq has resumed its quest for nuclear

weapons.

In response, the White House claims

there is proof Iraq is hiding chemical

and biological weapons. That proof

may well exist. If it does, the administration

should immediately take it to

the Security Council to help convince

skeptical friends and allies and to assist

the inspectors in their disarmament

work.

I remember when I was a student

here in Washington at Georgetown University

Law School at the time of the

Cuban missile crisis. President Kennedy

sent his Ambassador, Adlai Stevenson,

to the chambers of the United

Nations. He held up irrefutable proof of

the missiles being put in Cuba by the

then Soviet Union. With that proof, the

world rallied around the United States.

We have to remember how missteps

can create more problems. The situation

in North Korea today illustrates

how a dangerous situation can quickly

escalate unnecessarily. By taking options

off the table, we are worse off

today than we were a few months ago.

After backing the United States into a

corner, the White House is now discussing

donations of food and fuel, an

approach they ridiculed just a short

time ago. We have to be more consistent.

Today, there are no U.N. inspectors

monitoring the North Korean nuclear

facilities. Tensions have dramatically

increased, and we have serious disagreements

with our Japanese and

South Korean allies. Let us not make

the same mistake in Iraq that history,

both decades ago and more recently,

has tried to teach us.

Saddam Hussein must be disarmed to

the point that he is no longer a threat

to his neighbors. U.N. resolutions must

be respected and enforced. But these

are matters of concern to the world,

not just to the United States. We are

part of the world, but we are not the

whole world.

The U.N. inspectors need time to

complete their work. It is divisive and

damaging for the United States, having

secured a Security Council resolution,

two months later to short-circuit the

U.N. process in the name of enforcing

that same U.N. resolution.

To those officials in the White House

and the Pentagon who would use the

U.N. inspections as a mere excuse to

justify unilateral military action, I say

the same things as when I opposed the

resolution authorizing the use of force

that passed the Senate back in September:

This Vermonter never has and

never will give a blank check to this

President or to any President to wage

war.

The next weeks and months will be

decisive. Let’s hope the Iraqi Government

fulfills its obligations and the inspectors

finish the job in a manner

that gives credibility to their conclusions,

whatever those conclusions may

be. Let’s work with the U.N. Security

Council and our allies to find a way

forward.

Unlike his father a decade ago, this

President has not built a broad coalition

for military action. If diplomacy

fails, I am confident we can win a military

victory. After all, we have the

most powerful military in the world.

But acting unilaterally would be extremely

costly. It would lead to a prolonged

U.S. military occupation of

Iraq, the expenditure of tens, even hundreds,

of billions of dollars. It would

damage our relations with key allies,

and it would further inflame the anti-

American extremism that is growing

throughout the Muslim world, extremism

that threatens us more than anything

else today.

It threatens us because even today

terrorists plan their attacks within the

United States, not in the Persian Gulf.

We need the world to be with us. A

broad-based coalition is indispensable

for achieving long-term peace in the

Persian Gulf and the Middle East, as

well as our continuing efforts against

international terrorism.

This war is not inevitable. We should

not talk or act as if it is. But if war

does come, let the United States be

able to say we did everything we could

to try to solve this another way; that

we worked in concert with the United

Nations; and that the U.N. was

strengthened in the process. We must

be convinced that war is justified; that

the sacrifice of American lives can be

justified; that America taking this step

of a preemptive war can be justified

not only today but, in history’s eyes,

decades from now.

I do not believe that threshold has

yet been reached. So many of the

American people do not. Our allies do

not.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.