Madam President,

I rise today to express my growing concern

that we may shortly be faced with

a decision to unilaterally invade another

nation-state, and that is the

State of Iraq. This concern has been

heightened by the news of today’s assassination

attempt of Afghan President

Hamid Karzai in Kandahar. Earlier

on, a car bomb exploded in central

Kabul, killing at least 22 people.

This event, in my view, underscores

the point that our primary focus must

remain on our immediate war on terrorism

being waged in troubled Afghanistan,

where our soldiers are on the

front line. As a matter of fact, preliminary

reports indicate it was Americans

who took down the attempted assassins.

While I welcome President Bush’s recent

statement indicating he will seek

congressional approval of such a use of

force, I believe any action in Iraq at

this time, without allied support, without

United Nations support, and without

a compelling case for just cause,

would be both morally wrong and politically

mistaken.

I just returned from a trip to Europe.

As part of my role as chairman of the

Appropriations Subcommittee on Military

Construction, I toured U.S. military

bases and met with a variety of

individuals. They included members of

the intelligence community, the military,

and the International Atomic Energy

Agency.

I was shocked at how dramatically

perceptions in Europe have shifted

since September 11 toward our country.

All of the sympathy and concern we received

in the wake of the terrorist attacks

has apparently vanished, replaced

by the sense that the United

States is becoming an arrogant and aggressive

power, a nation that simply

gives orders, a nation that neither listens

nor hears.

When I was in Europe, much attention

was given to the absence of Presidential

participation at the Summit on

Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

And this, on top of our rejection

of the Kyoto treaty, our casting of aspersions

on international accords such

as the International Criminal Court,

the Anti-Ballistic Missile and Landmine

treaties, has led to a growing belief,

right or wrong, that the United

States is using its power in an increasingly

unilateral and somewhat arrogant

manner.

Above all, there is our approach to

Iraq and our perceived readiness to invade

that nation unilaterally.

I believe we have to ask many critical

questions, most of which are unanswered.

Questions about the ongoing war on

terrorism. How do we stay the course,

root out terrorism and, at the same

time, initiate war with a nation-state

which, to this day, remains

unconnected to 9/11.

Questions about the extent of Saddam

Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction

and about who will get to

them first.

Questions about going it alone in

Iraq.

Questions about casualties and cost.

Questions about collateral human

damage—civilians killed in the short

term and in the long run.

Questions about the future of Iraq,

about whether we can honestly expect

a democracy to be created out of a nation

consumed by tribal factionalism.

And questions about what the longterm

impact might be on the Arab

world, on the Middle East. What if Iraq

attacks Israel? What will we do, and

what will the world do?

Present United States policy toward

Iraq stands in stark contrast to how we

conducted Operation Desert Storm just

over a decade ago. Then, the first Bush

administration spent several months

building a broad-based coalition that

included 30 nations, including many in

the Islamic world. It sought and received

resolutions supporting the use

of force against Iraq from the United

States Congress and the United Nations

Security Council, and American

and international public opinion stood

firmly behind such action. Today, no

nation is firmly allied with the United

States on this issue.

At the very least, I believe we should

launch a major diplomatic effort with

the United Nations, our allies, and our

Arab friends, with the goal of delivering

an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein:

Either open up or go down.

If he does not comply with this demand,

it will give the United States

added moral and diplomatic strength

to any future effort. It will help unite

the world community behind us.

Additionally, I am very concerned

that the United States stay the course

on our war against terrorism. To date,

there is no direct connection between

Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and the 9/11 attacks

that has been substantiated.

This means staying the course in our

war against terrorism, part of which

exists in Afghanistan. The government

of Hamid Karzai is fragile at best.

Today should show that. During its

first 6 months in power, two Cabinet

officials have been assassinated.

Today, President Karzai himself barely

escaped an assassination attempt, and

a major act of terrorism has killed

many in central Kabul. The Karzai government

must have security and stability,

or it will perish and so will democracy.

Additionally, we know the Taliban

and al-Qaida lurk in the remote mountains,

waiting for an opportune moment

to come back. If Afghanistan cannot

be stabilized, if its streets and

homes cannot be made secure, and if

its first democratic government cannot

survive, this will be a very serious setback.

Afghanistan is our beachhead in the

war on terror. We cannot lose it, or we

lose the war on terror. We must put al-

Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, and a host of

other terrorist groups out of business

before they can strike out again at

America and our interests.

That is why concentrating on this

war—the critical war against terrorism—

is so important.

An attack on Iraq at this time would

only deflect from this war, by diverting

attention and forces away from bringing

to justice the perpetrators of 9/11.

Can we afford to do this?

If there is an imminent threat to the

United States or to our interests, then

we must act. At this moment, however,

I do not believe such a threat exists.

No one doubts that Iraq has chemical

or biological weapons and the means to

deliver them. They have used them on

at least three occasions, but they have

not used them in the last 10 years, and

I believe they know what will happen if

they do use them.

What is less clear, however, is the

status of Iraq’s nuclear weapons capability.

In 1981, Israel destroyed the

Osiraq reactor provided by France.

While Iraq continues to seek to develop

nuclear capability, there is no evidence

I have found that Iraq is nuclear capable

today. So there is no imminent

threat.

Secretary Rumsfeld has claimed that

if we wait for Iraq to develop nuclear

weapons, then it will be too late. He is

right. The key is to find a way to stop

Iraqi nuclear ambition, and stop it

now, which is why opening Iraq’s borders

to a search and destroy mission

for weapons of mass destruction, conducted

by our allies, our friends in the

Arab world, and the United Nations, is

critical.

I believe this requires renewed diplomatic

efforts on our part, with the

United Nations, with our allies, and

with friendly Arab nations. We must

stop Iraq from becoming nuclear capable.

And the world in turn must respond.

Otherwise, an attack becomes

the only alternative.

As Gen. Wesley Clark recently stated:

In the war on terrorism, alliances are not

an obstacle to victory. They’re the key to it.

By acting unilaterally, the United

States not only runs the risk of isolating

these long-standing allies, but

also of solidifying the entire Arab

world sharply against us. This may not

result in any direct or traditional military

response against the United

States, but what about a personal jihad

throughout this country—a jihad of

bombs and other terrorist acts carried

out throughout the world?

There are people out there eminently

capable and able to finance doing just

that.

With the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

not yet under control, a United States

attack on Iraq would certainly fuel the

fire of Islamic fanaticism, uniting the

Arab world against the West and Israel.

The consequences could be unprecedented

and beyond our present comprehension.

The Israeli-Palestinian situation

should be our highest priority. This

conflict must be resolved. The United

States must use its influence and leadership

here, with the Israelis, the Palestinians,

and the surrounding Arab

world. Here, too, we must stay the

course.

At the same time, there is some troubling

evidence today of the preparation

of a second front in southern Lebanon

to attack Israel in the event we attack

Iraq. Ambassador Dennis Ross recently

told me of thousands—he mentioned

10,000—extended-range Katyusha rockets

that have been moved through

Syria from Iran and into southern Lebanon,

for an attack on Israel. He said

they had been extended so that they

could hit at the major Israeli industrial

zone north of Haifa. I believe this

has been confirmed.

In the face of all of this, assume we

do attack Iraq. Consider that we mobilize

250,000 to 300,000 soldiers, our aircraft

carriers, our B–52s, our 117s. This

will not be another Desert Storm

where exposed Iraqi troops are routed

in the open desert, overwhelmed by

American airpower.

This war will be waged in Baghdad,

in Tikrit, and in other cities. It will be

waged from house to house and palace

to palace, from street to street and

school to school and hospital to hospital.

We will certainly kill many Iraqis,

and how many of our own will be

killed? And will we stay the course

once the body bags start coming back

to Dover? Will Americans stand up and

say, ‘‘More’’? I think not.

Then there are the thousands of innocent

Iraqi civilians civilians already

brutalized by the last 12 years—who

will become casualties in this war.

America has never been an aggressor

nation unless attacked, as we were at

Pearl Harbor and on September 11, or

our interests and our allies were attacked.

We have never initiated a

major invasion against another nationstate,

which leads to the question of

whether a preemptive war is the morally

right, legally right, or the politically

right way for the United States

to proceed.

Lastly, there is the immensely complicated

question of the Iraqi nation

Saddam Hussein now has and what will

happen if he is overthrown. Have we

really thought out our options here?

Have we taken into account the deep

tribal factionalism and divisions, the

bitter and often bloody rivalries among

the Shia majority, the ruling Sunni

minority, and the Kurds, that lie at the

very root of Iraq? Will we protect the

Kurds from possible genocide? How

long will we stay to secure a new government?

And who would replace Saddam

Hussein?

Let’s be realistic. A democracy is not

likely to emerge. One must look closely

at the history of Iraq to draw such a

conclusion, and I have.

Madam President, I would like to

quote from the recently published

book, ‘‘The Reckoning: Iraq and the

Legacy of Saddam Hussein’’ by Sandra

Mackey. She writes:

When [Saddam Hussein] finally loses

his grip on power either politically or

physically, he will leave Iraq much as

it was when the British created it—

torn by tribalism and uncertain in its

identity. It is this Iraq that threatens

to inflict its communal grievances, its

decades of non-cooperation, and its festering

suspicions and entrenched

hatreds on the Persian Gulf, the lifeline

of our global economy.

In light of such conditions, is the

United States ready to be an occupational

force? It could take many years

for the seeds of a stable pluralist society

to flourish in Iraq. Are we really

ready to spend a generation there?

Given what is at stake here—American

lives, American prestige, and

America’s respect for the rule of law—

we find ourselves at a critical crossroad.

Again, according to Sandra Mackey:

In closing, I am very happy to see

that President Bush will now seek congressional

approval regarding military

action. So this debate has just begun.

I look forward to working with my

colleagues in the Congress to ensure we

not only ask the questions but see that

the answers are moral, see that they

are legal, see that they are befitting

the greatest democracy on Earth, and

see whether they are worth, for the

first time, the United States of America

making a unilateral attack on another

nation-state.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence

of a quorum.