

the Congress but also the duty of governing. It is not acceptable to merely criticize, particularly if you are in the majority. We need to know what their alternative plan is for this unacceptable possibility of failure in Iraq if, in fact, we are to cut the legs out from under the Maliki government and simply withdraw before the Iraqis are able to sustain themselves.

Mr. President, I am one of those who have not given up on Iraq and who believe that our fighting forces in Iraq are doing a lot of good. It is true, as the President said, that mistakes have been made, but it is important to recognize that the initial threat in Iraq was of a Saddam Hussein delivering weapons of mass destruction and technology about biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons to terrorists to use against us, as the terrorists did on 9/11. Even a remote possibility that might happen was unacceptable. We voted with a vote of 77 Senators—on a bipartisan basis—to authorize the President to use military force to take out Saddam Hussein.

I don't need to recount the failures of our intelligence community that led us to erroneously believe he actually at that time did have weapons of mass destruction. But there is no question at all that Saddam Hussein sought weapons of mass destruction, much as his neighbor now to the east, Iran, seeks nuclear weapons itself. It is simply unacceptable, in a world where there are those driven by a radical ideology that celebrates the murder of innocent civilians, as al-Qaida and other Islamic radicals do, to allow them to get weapons of mass destruction and then to use them on innocent civilian populations, whether it is in the United States or abroad.

It is true that the President has said that this is a test for the Maliki government. We are putting a lot of reliance, yet pressure, on the Maliki government to perform. When Prime Minister Maliki said he will stand up to the death squads and Shiite militias, like that of al-Sadr, we will hold him to his word.

It is absolutely critical to the success of reconstruction in Iraq, to a peaceful self-determination through a democratic form of government, that the security situation in Iraq be stabilized. The only way that is going to happen is if a lawful government of Iraq obtains a monopoly on the legal use of force in that country. Right now, the people of Iraq don't trust their own Government to provide that sort of security, so they have broken down along sectarian lines and relied upon Shiite militias and other extralegal groups to try to provide that security. But what happened is that we have seen retribution killings between different ethnic groups. But the threat is that sort of sectarian violence is not going to be contained just to Iraq but will spill over into the region. Iran will use the opportunity of Shiite violence to exact ethnic cleansing on Sunni populations

in Iraq. Iran will use its ability to expand its influence into Iraq, perhaps to expand its own borders.

That will not go without some response by the Sunni majority nations in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia, for example, has already expressed grave concern that if the Shiite militias and others continue to exact violence upon the Sunni population, they may very well find a necessity to become involved and, indeed, we know that what some people view as if through a soda straw, violence in Iraq will become a regional conflict.

Is there any doubt that if, in fact, we fail in Iraq because we have given up, because we don't believe Iraq and the Middle East is worth this last best chance for success, is there any doubt that the oil and gas reserves in that region of the world will be used as an economic weapon against the United States? So not only will we have a security vulnerability using that platform of a failed state as a launching pad for future terrorist attacks, much as al-Qaida did in Afghanistan following the fall of the Soviet Union in that country, but is there any doubt that in addition to additional terrorist attacks in the United States and among our allies and around the world, that the oil and gas reserves in that region will be used as an economic weapon to wreak a body blow against the rest of the world?

So with winning the election on November 7 and gaining the majority and the mandate of the American people comes responsibility. The responsibility of our Democratic colleagues is to point out what their plans are when Iraq fails if we do not even try, as the President has proposed last night, to salvage the situation there by a change of course, by working with our Iraqi allies, backing them up, stiffening their backbone, to restore the security environment there so that reconstruction and democracy and self-government can flourish. I don't know whether it will work. I don't know whether anyone can ever guarantee in a time of war that one side or the other will be successful. But the consequences of giving up and of failure are simply too horrendous to contemplate, present too great a risk to the American people and civilized people around the world, for us not to try.

That, to me, is the choice we have been given—between trying, using the last best effort we can come up with through this change of course in Iraq, or simply giving up. I would like to hear from our colleagues what their plan is if Iraq does descend into that failed state, if a regional conflict occurs and it then becomes necessary at a future date not to send an additional 20,000 American troops but far more to protect America's national security interests.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senator from Maryland is recognized for 10 minutes.

IRAQ

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I yield myself 10 minutes of the time controlled by the majority.

Last night, President Bush asked the American people to support a surge of military troops in Iraq. Many are using the term "surge," though the President didn't. Make no mistake, this is a dramatic escalation of our troop presence in Iraq. In the debate leading into the President's speech, the term "surge" was used, which implied something that was limited and temporary. An escalation is where we are heading, which means a long-term commitment with no end in sight.

We are in a hole in Iraq, and the President says the way to dig out of this hole is to dig deeper. Does that make sense? When you are in a hole, do you get out by digging deeper? This is a reckless plan; it is about saving the Bush Presidency, it is not about saving Iraq.

Before Congress can act on this plan—and act we must—there are several questions that need to be answered. I need those answers, you need those answers, the American people need those answers and, more importantly, our troops and their families need those answers. Is this policy achievable? Is it sustainable? What is the President's objective in calling for this escalation of troops? Who is the enemy? Does the Bush administration even know anymore? When our troops are embedded with Iraqi forces, are they going to shoot Sunnis or Shiites? Are we taking sides in a civil war? I don't think we know. What is the Iraqi Government going to do for itself? We suddenly have something called benchmarks. Where have those benchmarks been for the last several years? What is going to be the political solution that only the Iraqis can do to resolve the power sharing with Sunni, Shiite, and Kurds? Where are the oil revenues that were talked about to pay for this war? When is the Iraqi Government going to end the corruption in their own ministries so that they can come to grips with services, security, and power sharing and oil revenue sharing?

Who is going to disarm the militias and insurgents and, more importantly, who is going to keep them disarmed? Are we going to be in those neighborhoods forever? Where are the troops going to come from for this escalation? Our military, our wonderful military is worn thin. Also, how are we going to pay for it? While China builds up its reserves, we build up our debt.

Make no mistake, though. U.S. troops cannot do what the Iraqi Government will not do for itself. Iraq needs a functioning government that produces security and services for its own people. It needs a government of reconciliation that will function on behalf of the Iraqi people. Iraq needs its own security forces up and running. No matter what training we give them, they have to have the will to fight. They need to put an end to the sectarian violence, and they need to end

this corruption in their own ministries to get oil production moving and a way to share those oil revenues.

There are those who say: Well, what about supporting our troops? I absolutely do support our troops. And for those troops who are in Iraq, let me say this: Your Congress will not abandon you.

But the best way to support the troops is not to send them on this reckless mission. The best way to support our troops is to bring them home safely and swiftly. That is why I voted against this preemptive war in the first place. In my speech when I was 1 of the 23, I said: We don't know if we will be greeted with flowers or landmines. I said: We shouldn't go to Iraq on our own. We need to go with the world if, in fact, the weapons are there.

Well, from the very beginning, everything the Congress and the American people have been told by this administration has proven not to be so. It has either been an outright lie or dangerously incompetent. The President asked the Congress to vote for a preemptive war because Iraq was supposed to have weapons of mass destruction that posed an imminent danger to the United States. Well, the Congress gave the preemptive authority. However, the weapons of mass destruction were not there.

I say to my colleagues, after all of those troops we sent, weren't you filled with shock and awe to find out there were no weapons?

Then, the administration sent Colin Powell to the United Nations to make the case for war. He is one of the most esteemed Americans in the world, and the Bush administration set him up. Then—CIA Director Tenet said it was going to be a slam dunk. To this day, Colin Powell cries foul about what happened to him at the U.N. How can we trust the data or judgment of an administration that continually gives us this fiasco?

Now, what about President Bush's good friend, Prime Minister Maliki? I listened to my colleague from Texas. He said: Are we giving up on Maliki? The question is, is Maliki giving up on Iraq. Are we cutting the legs out from Maliki? I say no, Maliki's government has no legs. They are not involved in dealing with the corruption, with power sharing. It is the same Maliki who told our U.S. marines they couldn't go into a neighborhood to go after a Shiite cleric called al-Sadr, who bankrolls attacks on American soldiers. Is Maliki an honest broker in Iraq or is he someone who represents the Shiites?

I don't have confidence in what we have been told by this administration, and I have very serious doubts about the will of the administration of Prime Minister Maliki. Make no mistake—and I feel so deeply about this—a great American military cannot be a substitute for a weak Iraqi Government. The stronger we are, the more permission we give the Iraqis to be weak.

We were challenged a few minutes ago to say: Well, what is the alternative? I say let's use the ideas that have come from our commanders, which have now been put aside, the Iraq Study Group, and others within the region. Let's use Baker-Hamilton as a starting point. Let's send in the diplomats before we send in the troops. I don't embrace all of the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, but it is a bipartisan way of going forward. It was not reckless. Once we send in those troops, it is irrevocable. I think we need a new policy, and I think we need a new direction. I think Baker-Hamilton gave us a good direction to pull us together to go in, and I think that is where we need to go.

Let me conclude by saying this: To our outstanding men and women in uniform who are already in Iraq, you have a tough job, and we are proud of you. Neither the Congress nor the American people will ever abandon you. But to those troops who are waiting to head to Iraq, the best way to support you is to say no to the President's reckless, flawed escalation of this war in Iraq.

Again, let's send in the diplomats, not the troops.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senator from Colorado is recognized for 15 minutes.

EVOLVING DISASTER IN COLORADO

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I rise today to call to the attention of the Members of the Senate an evolving disaster that is occurring in parts of eastern Colorado as well as parts of Nebraska, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Kansas and to concur with statements made earlier this week by my colleague, Senator ROBERTS from Kansas. On Monday, my friend from Kansas stated that he rose to call attention to what can only be described as a major disaster. I agree with Senator ROBERTS, there can be no doubt that we are dealing with a disaster in the West.

Over the last few weeks Colorado and its neighbors have experienced record-setting blizzards. In some parts of Colorado the storms dropped almost 5 feet of snow which has drifted in some cases to a size of 15 feet. I stand about 6 feet 1 inch, so to get some perspective, 5 feet of snow would leave my neck and shoulders just out above the snow. It is tough to get around in and a nightmare if you have to tend to livestock, but that is what folks in Colorado, and in the neighboring States have done. In fact, so much snow has fallen in Baca County down in southeastern Colorado that weather stations that transmit data including snowfall were unable to send information because they were buried under a number of feet of snow.

Let me reiterate that there was so much snow in Baca County that they were unable to measure it. This has

created a horrendous situation for many in the West. Thousands of cattle and other livestock are currently stranded without food or water. Many have died due to the freezing temperatures. I have here a photo of an animal that is caked with several inches of snow. There are ice sickles falling down off of the nose of the animal and off of the underbelly of the animal. This is a hearty animal. Most animals that have suffered this kind of condition would not survive. The reason I point this out to the Members of the Senate is it just shows how ferocious this particular storm was and how serious of an impact it has had on the animals. This doesn't occur unless you have very severe blizzard conditions with lots of snow accompanying it.

The aftermath of these devastating blizzards continues to paralyze many counties in Colorado and the West. Dozens of communities have experienced severe economic damage and loss as a result of these blizzards. These storms have created a dire situation. Thousands of local men and women have banded together and are working to provide relief to their neighbors and to the tens of thousands of livestock facing starvation. In the tradition of the West, local individuals have pulled together and spent much of their holiday season trying to dig each other out and reach stranded livestock.

These storms struck during a time of year when ranchers in Colorado are preparing for the National Western Stock Show, one of the largest stock shows in the world. The stock show is an important opportunity for ranchers to show stock and to make contacts. Now in its 101st year, this year's stock show has seen a marked drop in attendance due to these storms.

A story in the Rocky Mountain News was "No-Show Stock Show." I have received reports that livestock pens are sitting empty at the stock show and that the number of exhibitors is down. This is because the animals that would fill the pens are fighting for their very survival and the ranchers who would typically exhibit simply can't make it because they are trying to save their stock. Folks aren't at the stock show because they are back home trying to help one another deal with the aftermath of these major storms. Locals are trying to do all they can.

I am grateful for the assistance that the National Guard and FEMA have provided. Unfortunately, more help is needed. The vicious combination of blizzards was especially hard on eastern Colorado and the farmers and ranchers who call this part of Colorado home.

The part of Colorado hardest hit by these blizzards is also one of the most important agricultural regions in our Nation and is an epicenter for cattle production. Ranchers in this part of the State are currently racing against time in an attempt to locate cattle that have been stranded without feed or water. Unfortunately, as each day