that somehow, by giving up on that, we are going to bring an end to the violence and the death in Iraq. To the contrary, we would create a failed state where al-Qaeda, the very same people who hit this country on September 11, 2001, could reorganize, train, and recruit, and export future terrorist attacks to the United States.

I am chilled by comments made a few months ago when I attended a ceremony where the Deputy Secretary of Defense spoke.

He said:

Because they could not kill 30,000, because they could not kill 3 million.

His point is if they had the kind of biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons they are seeking, they would have killed thousands—perhaps hundreds of thousands more innocent Americans. And they will do that at will if they are part of the political theatre going on here 85 percent of the time has expired. Then he answered his own question.

He asked rhetorically:

Do you know why al-Qaeda killed 3,000 people on September 11, 2001, in New York and Washington, DC?

Then he answered his own question. He said:

That is what General Petraeus is saying. That is what we have to accomplish. We have some hopeful signs in Iraq now, for the first time in a long time, as a result of this new strategy that is only about half way implemented. But if we are going to succeed, it won’t be because our commanders have had their hands tied by arbitrary deadlines in Washington, DC. It will be because of the political theater going on here 85 days after the President had requested the emergency spending included in this bill for necessary equipment for our troops.

The leadership should sign this legislation and get it to the President so he can veto it and we can get down to the serious business of providing for our troops.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority’s time has expired.

The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

IRAQ

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, 4 years ago today, President Bush landed on the USS Abraham Lincoln in his helicopter and declared mission accomplished. He proudly said, “Mission accomplished.” President Bush announced to the world, and to the American people, that “major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed.”

I can think of almost no greater act of hubris, arrogance, and denial than the declaration of mission accomplished in Iraq 4 years ago. It is truly stunning to me that statement was.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished. Yet, since that time, 3,000 U.S. troops have been killed in Iraq. Over 104 American troops died in April alone, making it the deadliest month since last December.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished. Yet we have now spent over $450 billion on the war in Iraq. This war is costing us almost 10 times what the Bush administration initially said it would.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished. Yet we have now been in Iraq for nearly 50 months, longer than the United States was in World War II.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished. Yet U.S. troop fatalities are up 33 percent since the President’s escalation of the war in January.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished. Yet today, Iraqi civilian casualties are estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands. It is impossible to know how many have been killed in Iraq, but the United Nations estimates that 35,000 civilians have been killed.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished. Yet today oil production in Iraq is still 15 percent lower than it was before the war.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished. Yet Baghdad is only getting 6 hours of electricity a day, significantly less than before the war.

Four years ago today, President Bush declared mission accomplished. Yet the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction just put out a new report detailing how projects the administration declared a “success” are actually failing and no longer operating.

Frankly, it reminds me of all the other ways we were misled by this administration. Let us remember what this administration told us about this war. Let us remember the Iraq myths. Remember the unfound weapons of mass destruction; remember the missiles with nuclear warheads; remember Saddam’s nonexistent vast stockpiles of chemical weapons; remember Secretary Rumsfeld told us that “we know where the weapons of mass destruction are;” remember the non-existent link between al-Qaeda and Saddam; remember the claims that Iraqi oil and other countries, not the United States taxpayer, would pay for the war; remember when President Bush told us the war would cost only between $50 billion and $60 billion; remember when Paul Wolfowitz said “it seems outlandish” to think we would need several hundred thousand troops in Iraq; and remember when President Bush told us on May 1, 2003, that “major combat operations in Iraq have ended.”

This is the same administration that now comes to this Congress and says: Trust us, this is the same administration that says: Trust us, our new escalation plan will work. This is the same administration that tells this Congress and the American people to be patient, to give their “new” plan to escalate the war time to work.

Yet their new plan is more of the same. To quote one of the witnesses who testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

This plan is just stay-the-course plus 20,000 troops.

That is what they thought then when the witness testified, but eventually it has been a lot more than 20,000 troops.
Well, the American people and this Congress have run out of patience. This administration has run out of credibility to ask for more time or another chance, when all we are largely doing is staying the course. Frankly, I find it insulting to think this administration thinks the Congress would go along with their escalation plan without question.

Why should we support President Bush’s escalation—a plan with benchmarks but no real consequences? As I have been saying time and time again, benchmarks without consequences are simply aspirations. We have seen countless misguided plans from this administration, but the Iraqis have never been held accountable.

We were told by the end of 2006 a provincial election law would be approved. But that benchmark has not been met. We were told that Iraqis would approve a law for de-Baathification. But that benchmark has not been met.

We were told that Iraqis would create a law to help restrain sectarian militias. But that benchmark, too, has not been met.

We were told the Iraqis would establish a law to regulate the oil industry and share revenues, which is one of the critical elements to be able to achieve reconciliation in Iraq, the sharing of the nation’s national resources. But that benchmark has not been met.

Time and again, the Iraqi Government has failed short; and time and again, this administration has looked the other way—basing their plans on the hope that the Iraqis will step up. Continuing this failed policy in Iraq based on the mere hope that things will improve is not good enough. The broken promise must stop.

It also seems to me the President is once again out of touch about our progress on the ground and his escalation plan. The President said last week:

“The direction of the fight is beginning to shift... and so far the operation is meeting expectations.”

This is very much like “mission accomplished.” Yet, last Monday, an attack carried out by a suicide bomber near the town of Hillah killed 9 soldiers and wounded 20 others. The explosion was one of the deadliest single ground attacks on American forces since the start of the war.

Two weeks ago, five different bombs exploded in Baghdad, killing at least 171 people. These attacks mark the deadliest day in the capital city since the new security plan was implemented 2 months ago.

In fact, almost four coalition soldiers have been killed per day in the past month—the highest rate since January of 2005. As I pointed out before, over 100 soldiers were killed in April, including 9 killed over the weekend, 1 of only 6 times that more than 100 servicemen were killed in 1 month since the start of the war.

Violence outside of Baghdad is on the rise, with more than twice the number of American troops killed in the past 5 months in the capital province than were killed all of last year.

In terms of civilians, over 1,500 Iraqis were killed between February 14 and April 12. That is almost 500 more people than were killed during the previous 2 months.

Frankly, I don’t believe the President’s escalation plan is working. So I say to the President: The era of blank checks is over and the time of congressional oversight has begun. The President would largely want us to send him a blank check. We have spent 10 times more than we were told we would spend on this war, and there is no end in sight in terms of lives and national treasure. That is why this Senate and the House sent the President an Iraq spending bill with a responsible timeline for withdrawing our troops from Iraq. I believe the President is making a serious mistake with his plan to violate their own imagination, born of delusion and denial, yet another terrible mistake in a series of tragic errors?

I close by asking: When will this administration finally understand that “mission accomplished” was a myth of their own imagination, born of delusion and denial, yet another terrible mistake in a series of tragic errors?

When will we finally hear the words “major combat in Iraq has ended” and know they are true?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEnHOUSE). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, 4 years ago today, as Senator MENENDEZ said, the President landed on an aircraft carrier in a flurry of pomp and circumstance, and declared, “Mission accomplished.”

Since that day, much has happened. Since that day, 3,000 brave American soldiers and marines have died in Iraq. This war has gone on, since that day, longer than World War II. Since that day, the United Nations has estimated that 35,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed. Since that day, U.S. taxpayers have spent $450 billion on the war in Iraq.

To get an understanding of what $450 billion is, if we spent $500 every second of every minute of every hour of every day, it would take 29 years to spend the $450 billion we have spent in Iraq.

Now, 4 years later, our troops in Iraq are stuck in the middle of a civil war. Too many of our brave soldiers do not have the body armor they need, in spite of the imploring of so many of us to the administration to do what they need to do to protect our soldiers. Now thousands of Guard and Reserve men and women face early and extended redeployment.

Four years later, the will of the people resonates in townhalls and in...
churches, in back yards and in living rooms across this country. Their message is clear: Mr. President, redeploy our troops out of Iraq.

Up to now, however, the President has refused to hear the calls of millions of Americans who want our troops to come home. He refused to listen to voters last fall who demanded a different course in Iraq. He has refused to listen to the Iraq Study Group, which recommended the redeployment of our troops out of Iraq. He has refused to listen to his own generals who have implored him, in many cases, to disengage from this civil war. He has refused to listen to Congress.

The supplemental on its way to the White House echoes what many of us in Congress and military families across this great country have been saying: We need a new direction for Iraq.

We take a backseat to no one in supporting the brave men and women fighting in Iraq. That is why so many of us have pushed this administration, pushed for leadership in the Pentagon and in the White House to equip our soldiers with proper body armor.

We take a backseat to no one in supporting the families of our soldiers overseas. Many of us in this Chamber have pushed to help these support groups that have formed all over the country for soldiers and helping them reintegrate back into their jobs, back with their families and their society when they return home from Iraq.

But more of the same is not a plan for our troops and will not end the war in Iraq. This war has made our country and our world less safe. Congress will continue to fight for our nation’s military by working to see that they have the resources and the support they need and the leadership they deserve.

This legislation fully funds and supports our troops, while establishing conditions that will bring our troops home. It provides desperately needed funding to the Veterans’ Administration, something this administration and previous Republican Congresses have woefully underfunded. It provides desperately needed funding to the Veterans’ Administration to help care for the hundreds of thousands of new veterans created by this war.

If the President will not take responsibility for his failures in his conduct of the war, then Congress will. If the President will not lead our troops home, then Congress will. We owe it to our soldiers, to our sailors, to our airmen, airwomen, and to our marines, and we owe it to their families.

Instead of threatening a veto, the President should listen to the military leaders, listen to the American people, and work with Congress to change the course in Iraq.

Vetoing this legislation would deny funding our military and our veterans desperately need. $28 billion in emergency Department of Defense spending, more than the President’s budget; $3 billion for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles; $48 billion in military construction for BRAC, the Base Closing Commission; and the VA, which has beenunderfunded by $2 billion in the President’s budget under this bill would get $1.7 billion immediately, more than the President’s VA proposal, and will do better in the next budget. It includes $100 million for VA mental health services.

It is absolutely outrageous that this Congress—the House and Senate—and this President send our men and women into battle without providing them with the right body armor, not giving them the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles we know how to build in this country, and then when they return home, not giving tens of thousands of soldiers and marines the health care they deserve.

In addition to what we do to restore that spending and take care of our veterans when they return home, this emergency legislation has over $1 billion for Katrina relief, $13 billion for mine safety because of the increase in deaths in mines in places such as Pennsylvania and West Virginia, $625 million for the pandemic flu response, something we absolutely need to be prepared for, and $400 million for energy assistance for the low-income elderly.

Please, Mr. President, before you decide to veto this bill, read this legislation. Don’t turn your back on millions of Americans, don’t turn your back on your military advisers and the military experts, don’t turn your back on our soldiers. Sign this legislation.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the issue of Iraq, to call on the President to sign the supplemental appropriations bill, the emergency bill that we will be sending on its way to the President, to sign into law so many of us in Washington, and the members of the White House echoes what many of us in this Chamber have pushed to help these support groups that have formed all over the country for soldiers and helping them reintegrate back into their jobs, back with their families and their society when they return home from Iraq.

CWO Keith Yoakum, 41, died on February 2, in Taji, Iraq, when his helicopter crashed.

Chief Warrant Officer Four Yoakum was assigned to A Company, 1st Battalion, 22nd Aviation Regiment, 1st Aviation Brigade, 1st Aviation Division, Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Sergeant Major Ellis was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Marine Expeditionary Unit, Special Operations Capable, 1 Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.

SGT James R. Tijerina, 26, died February 7, when the helicopter he was flying in crashed while supporting combat operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Sergeant Tijerina was assigned to Marine Helicopter Squadron 364, Marine Aircraft Group 39, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, 1 Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.

SP Outstanding Achievement Medal, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, TX. He was from Hemet, CA.

SP Dennis L. Seiler, Jr., 20, died on February 11, in Umm Qasar, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his unit came in contact with the enemy using small arms fire in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. First Lieutenant Landaker was assigned to Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 364, Marine Aircraft Group 39, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, 1 Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.

SP Jennie J. Harris, 28, died February 7, when the helicopter she was flying in crashed while supporting operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. She was assigned to Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 364, Marine Aircraft Group 39, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, 1 Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.

SP Robert R. Thraisher, 21, died on February 1, in Taji, Iraq, when his damaged patrol received small arms fire. Sergeant Thraisher was assigned to D Company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Bliss, TX. He was from Folsom, CA.

SP Clarence E. Spencer, 24, died February 4, in Balad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his unit came in contact with the enemy using small arms fire in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. First Lieutenant Spence was assigned to 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, TX. He was from San Diego, CA.

SP Dennis L. Seiler, Jr., 20, died on February 11, in Umm Qasar, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his unit came in contact with the enemy using small arms fire in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. First Lieutenant Seagard was assigned to 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, TX. He was from San Diego, CA.

SP Carl L. Seigart, 23, died February 14, in Baqubah, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle. Sergeant Seigart was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, TX. He was from San Luis Obispo, CA.

SP Brian E. Escalante, 25, died February 17, while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Lance Corporal Escalante was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 1 Marine Expeditionary Force, 2nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, Special Operations Capable, 1 Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, CA.