Mr. Speaker, the other night I had the

honor of joining you at the prayer service

in the rotunda of this great building,

this great monument, this beacon

of our democracy and our freedoms to

the world. As I sat there, I thought

about the fact that this building may

very well have been a target on that

sad day.

As I looked around, I thought what a

tragedy it would be if this building had

been leveled by that terrorist act. Then

I thought more as I listened to those

who spoke so eloquently from both

sides of the aisle and our religious leaders.

I thought it is really not about

buildings. It is really not about monuments.

It is about the American people.

The action that was taken by these

terrorists against the American people

must be responded to and it must be responded

to with resolution in a most

comprehensive fashion. It cannot be a

symbolic act. It cannot be a one-time

action. It must be comprehensive. We

must be diligent and the American people

must be patient.

This is very difficult and it is very

different than the forces of power we

have authorized in the past where

many times enemies were clear. Here

there are subtleties and complexities

and organizational complexes that defy

much of our thinking. We will have

some successes and we will have some

failures. But we must do this because

we must understand that the enemy

here made a conscious and intentional

decision to slaughter innocent people.

They put people randomly, randomly

in harm’s way and killed them in a

most arbitrary of fashions, in a manner

which overwhelmed our senses and

stunned our Nation. We must understand

we have an obligation to the

American people to take that action.

I would hope as we do that, the people

in this country would have patience

with one another; that they would recognize

that when the airplane slammed

into those buildings, it killed Muslims

and Christians and Jews and Asians

and Italians and Irish and all the rest.

It killed the landscape of the American

society. When we do this, we must understand

that we cannot lose that national

character, which is truly our liberties

and freedoms that are the beacon,

the light that goes out from this

building to those people in those nations

that yearn for them and do not

have them.

I wish our President well. I wish our

armed services well in this effort, and I

ask the American people for their understanding

in the complex nature of

the force we are authorizing here

today.