Mr. Speaker, I

appreciate the leadership of the gentleman

from Colorado (Mr. MCINNIS) on

this issue and many other issues. He is

a colleague of mine on the House Committee

on Ways and Means. He plays a

crucial role on a number of issues from

tax reform to preserving Social Security

and Medicare to trying and open

up new markets around the world. But

it is his, I think, vision on national security

and this war on terrorism that

prompted me to be here tonight. I appreciate

him allowing me to be part of

this program on an evening that I

think history will mark as a very important

next step in the war on terrorism.

Recently, I had the privilege of attending

two rallies for America back in

Texas, in my home region. The first

one a couple of weeks ago was coordinated

by KPRC radio in Houston. Two

of the on-air commentators, Chris

Baker and Pat Gray, put together a

rally just on a week’s notice, a mere

week’s notice, just basically invited

the community to come together and

support our troops and support this

country. It was a remarkable rally. It

was a cold and dreary day, not one that

attracts a lot of people naturally; but

yet in this plaza in downtown Houston

there were between 8 and 10,000 Americans

there to show their support for

this President and support our troops

or military men and women. And then

last weekend in Woodland, Texas,

where I live, not three blocks from

where Cathy and I live with our two

young boys, we had a rally for America

as well. This one was organized by Dr.

K.P. Reddy, who is an immigrant from

India, a legal immigrant who came

here with very little money in his

pocket but a desire to live the American

dream.

He organized this rally basically to

remind America what a remarkable

Nation we live in and what remarkable

freedoms and blessings we possess. And

both of these rallies were to me remarkable

because they were just a

grass roots outpouring of people who

understand the importance of our security

to our families and to our Nation.

I had a chance to talk to the groups

at both of these rallies and here are the

thoughts I shared with them: back

home 1,200 miles from here in Washington,

D.C., back home in College Station,

Texas, is the George Bush Presidential

Library Museum. Captured in

these magnificent engraved letters

high on the granite walls on the museum

where each afternoon if you drive

past, the beautiful Brazos Valley sun

captures these words, and I think they

are very appropriate to our time in our

Nation. And the words say, ‘‘Let every

generation understand the blessings

and burdens of freedom. Let them say

we stood where duty required us to

stand.’’

As we stand today on the eve of liberating

Iraq and striking another blow

against international terrorism, thousands

of our young men and women

stand watch on foreign soil. Our soldiers

are on patrol in Bosnia-

Hersgovenia, Kosovo and Macedonia.

They are hunting al Qaeda terrorists in

Afghanistan and the Philippines. They

are on patrols in the skies of Iraq and

on the seas throughout the world. They

are unloading the equipment near Turkey

and training in the deserts of Kuwait.

These patriots and their families

are suffering hardships and making

great sacrifices at this Nation’s behest.

There is a good chance in the next

few hours that we will ask even more

of them. Another generation of Americans

is standing where duty requires

them to stand, and we are standing

with them. For all our faults, America

remains a good, good country. We did

not deserve the attacks of September

11, nor the celebrations that followed

in some parts of the world. And as happens

in times of crisis, 9/11 brought out

the best in America. We sensed a Nation

turning back toward what is truly

important, our faith, our families and

our precious freedom. We saw it in the

thousand flags flying, in overflowing

hearts and in overflowing churches.

You may recall in his September 20

speech to the Nation, to the joint session

of Congress, President Bush spoke

for all of us then when he vowed that

America would not rest until we had

rooted out terrorism around the world.

He said that countries harboring terrorists

would be treated as terrorist

nations themselves; that if you financed

terrorists, if you trained terrorists,

if you provided them safe harbor

in your country, that you would be

treated as a terrorist nation yourself.

He cautioned wisely that the coming

war would be a long one, to be measured

in years rather than months.

As we have been reminded repeatedly

by the recent al Qaeda attacks in Bali

and Kenya, by the audiotape of bin

Laden and his second in command predicting

more terrorist attacks in

America, as we have been reminded in

the announcement that American intelligence

have quietly thwarted more

than 100 separate terrorist efforts, the

question is not if America will be attacked

again at home, but when and by

whom. Instead of crashing airplanes

into our downtown buildings, the terrorists

of the future may well turn to

dangerous chemical and biological

weapons, suicide bombers, attempts to

poison our air and water, disrupt our

energy supply, our electronic commerce,

and destroy our economy and

the jobs that we and our neighbors rely

upon. They will direct these weapons of

terrible destruction toward America,

because standing as the world’s lone

superpower also means standing as the

world’s biggest target. Despite what

Hollywood and others are trying so

desperately to sell to you, our homeland,

our communities, our schools,

our neighborhoods and millions of

American lives remain at risk as we

speak tonight.

We are going to fight this war on terrorism

one way or another, either overseas

at its source or here at home when

it lands right on top of our neighborhoods.

We choose overseas, at terrorism’s

source.

Personally I can tell you that casting

a vote for war is the most difficult vote

you ever cast. I have a younger brother

Matt, who is a medic in the Army. He

was deployed to Desert Storm a decade

ago. Since then, he and his wife have

added two young children to their family,

Mattie and Caitland. He recently

got word he is headed back to Turkey.

Any time you cast a vote that will send

your family to war, any time you cast

a vote to send anyone’s family, anyone’s

son or daughter, to a war they

may not return from, you think hard

and you pray hard over it. Yet I know

it was the right vote to cast, and Matt

feels even more strongly than me.

I am certain because the first responsibility

of our government is to defend

American citizens. It is not the United

Nations’ responsibility, it is not

France’s nor Germany’s. It is ours. The

Afghanistan campaign was certainly

the first step in the war on terrorism,

but does anyone believe all terrorism

begins and ends in Afghanistan? Does

anyone believe there is only one terrorist,

Osama bin Laden? Does anyone

seriously believe Saddam Hussein has

disarmed? Of course not.

By any measure, Saddam Hussein

presents a grave threat to the safety,

the security and the well-being of

Americans here at home. Disarming

Iraq and its support for state-sponsored

terrorism is the next logical step to secure

peace for our families and the

world.

I served as a member of the House

International Relations Committee for

a number of years. Serving on that

committee, it became clear to me that

terrorism expands according to our

willingness to tolerate it. Terrorism

expands according to our willingness to

accept it. For too long the world has

turned a blind eye to terrorism. We

have been afraid to confront it. Terrorism

has grown strong because the

actions of our world leaders never really

matched their tough words.

That is over now. That all changed

September 11. That all changed with

President Bush as our Commander in

Chief, and that all changed with a Nation

that supports him. For the sake of

our community and our security, we

have to mean what we say. And for the

sake of our children’s future, we must

follow through on our vow to end terrorism.

We know from experience that America’s

security at home depends upon

our strength in the world. The value of

our military to deter attacks and

maintain peace depends in great measure

on the value of our word. If the

United Nations fails, and unfortunately

they have as of tonight, although

President Bush has bent over backwards

to reach a diplomatic solution,

the bottom line is you cannot give

someone a backbone. They have to

have one themselves. I think the exercise

with the United Nations in which

we tried so hard proves what global security

experts have long suspected.

Many nations in the world want terrorism

to end, but few want the responsibility

of actually doing it. If Saddam

Hussein chooses to continue to arm

himself and harbor terrorists, then

America must act. Words alone are not

enough. And when we send U.S. troops

overseas, it must be to win and to return

home as planned.

President George Washington said,

there is nothing so likely to produce

peace as to be well prepared to meet an

enemy. We know the enemy. We know

the difficulty. We know the duty, and

we know the strength of America’s

military men and women, and we will

not undermine them here at home. Despite

what some believe, as Americans

our rush is not for war, it is for peace,

a secure peace, so that back in Texas

where I live and in communities across

America, when our families leave home

each morning, they return home safely

to us that night. That is not too much

to ask. As the United States has shown

in every world war, we are fighting not

just for our Nation, but for a world free

of fear, free from the horrors that fill

our television screens too often, free

from the threat of weapons of mass destruction

which grow and grow each

day, free from all that terrorism

spawns.

If you think war is expensive, try living

in terror. How much would we pay,

how much would we give to have prevented

the attacks of 9/11? To those

who protest the war, I respectfully ask,

was September 11 not enough? Was not

September 11 enough to convince you

this is not a game? This is not politics

as usual. This is not Vietnam. This is

like no other war. This is the prospect

of a holocaust on our shores, on America’s

shores, among our communities,

killing our families, injuring our

neighbors, destroying our way of life

for generations to come. And all the

made-for-media protests, all the petitions

and the slick TV ads in the world

will not stop the next terrorists from

attacking innocent Americans here on

our shores again.

By standing tall, by standing firm, I

believe President Bush has demonstrated

what we all know in our

hearts. Leadership is never easy, nor is

it always popular, which is why we are

so grateful for the nations and the

leaders who stand with us, more than

30 of them, the third largest coalition

in a century, people who are willing to

say to international terrorism, enough.

Enough. I am convinced, looking back,

if more had stood with us, if France

and Germany had put world security

ahead of their shortsighted political

ambitions, that we may well have disarmed

Iraq and exiled Saddam Hussein

without a shot being fired. Sadly, we

will never know.

In some ways, I do not really worry

about those in the free world who question

the war. I worry about those in

the world of terrorism who question

the resolve of the American people. As

you may recall, within days after the

attacks of September 11, many around

the world predicted that America

would not have the heart nor the attention

span nor the fortitude to mean

what we say. They will soon learn they

are wrong. No one knows better than

Americans that if a nation values anything

more than freedom, it will lose

its freedom. The irony of it is that if it

is comfort or it is money that it values

more, it will lose that, too.

I have great faith in the American

people. We will stand with President

Bush. We will stand with our American

military. We will stand where duty requires

us to stand.

On the issue of defending America

and disarming Saddam Hussein, people

often ask, why Iraq and why now? To

that, let me yield back to my colleague

from Colorado, who speaks so eloquently

about the need to defend our

America and to secure peace throughout

the world.

I appreciate

your leadership, and I think you have

really concluded on the right note at

the right time.

We are facing history in a war that is

so unique. It is unlike any other. I

think what some people do not understand

is that the international community

has ranked those nations around

the world who are the champions of

state-sponsored terrorism, and have for

many years. Of those countries, Iraq

has topped that list for many, many

years. Their ability and willingness to

allow training of terrorists to occur, to

allow financing of terrorists to occur,

to allow safe haven and transit and

medical treatment to those terrorists

around the world all place them in a

unique situation.

I will tell you that this past weekend

we remembered the victims of Saddam

Hussein’s terrible chemical weapons attack

on the people of Halabja, a city in

northern Iraq, and other village attacks

in the Al-Anfal campaign.

On March 6, 1988, 15 years ago, the

Iraqi Air Force dropped a devastating

mix of mustard and nerve gas on citizens

in this city. Five thousand of Hussein’s

own people were killed immediately

at his hand, several thousand

died later, and an estimated 10,000 people

were maimed and still are suffering

the effects of this attack. If you wonder

if this gentleman is capable of

launching an attack, if not today, in

the future as he grows stronger, all we

need to do is look at his attack on his

own people.

With this, I will conclude. I understand

that the President’s spokesman,

Ari Fleischer, has just announced the

disarmament of Iraq has begun. The

President will address the Nation at

10:15.

I believe we are at this moment in

time reflecting on, in the words on the

wall of the George Bush Presidential

Library in College Station, ‘‘Let every

generation understand the blessings

and burdens of freedom. Let them say

we stood where duty required us to

stand.’’

Tonight, under the President’s leadership,

yet again we will stand where

duty requires us to stand.