Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to come

before my colleagues and those that might be looking in to speak about

the war in Iraq.

We have heard colleagues speak about the issue tonight in poignant

and, no doubt, sincere terms. Mostly, the words of my Democrat

colleagues register their objection to the ongoing war in Iraq, and

that is expected, as Democrats will prepare to bring to the floor of

the House of Representatives by this weekend a war spending bill that

will include timetables for withdrawal that will add unconstitutional

provisions which will necessitate the beginning of troop withdrawals by

July 2007, with the goal of ending U.S. combat operations no later than

March of 2008.

I want to leave for a little later, Mr. Speaker, the discussion of

whether or not Congress has the constitutional authority that will be

contemplated in this legislation, but for now I want to speak

specifically to the state of the war. And I want to say, as President

Bush said yesterday in the Oval Office, this is a tough time in Iraq.

In my role as the ranking Republican member of the Middle East

Subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs Committee here in the House of

Representatives, I am regularly and routinely briefed both about our

surge strategy, the efforts of U.S. and coalition and Iraqi forces on

the ground, and of course regularly briefed on the efforts of

insurgents and al Qaeda and those attempting to foment sectarian

violence and to generate a civil war in Iraq. It is a tough time in

Iraq.

This week, we will hear from our commander in Baghdad. General David

Petraeus is on Capitol Hill as we speak, preparing to meet tomorrow

with Members of the United States House of Representatives to present

his report on the progress of the surge. And that is specifically what

I want to speak about tonight, because, Mr. Speaker, I suspect my

colleagues will hear tomorrow what I heard from General David Petraeus

in Baghdad just 3 weeks ago when I traveled with colleagues in the

House and Senate to tour literally the streets of Baghdad and to tour

our progress in Ramadi and in al-Anbar province.

I believe what General Petraeus will tell our colleagues on Capitol

Hill tomorrow is that despite a recent wave of insurgent and horrific

bombings, this war is not lost. In fact, because of the President's

surge and the brave and courageous conduct of American soldiers on the

ground and brave Iraqis on the ground, we are making modest progress in

Iraq in the early months of this surge.

But, as General Petraeus will say, while Congress will this week

contemplate embracing a resolution that will be built upon the

predicate that the war is lost, in fact there is evidence that this new

surge strategy both in Baghdad and in the al-Anbar province are

beginning to have a good effect.

In Baghdad, for instance, as I will chronicle tonight, despite recent

and horrific bombings, sectarian violence is down significantly in the

past 2 months. Baghdad is not safe, but it is safer because of the

deployment of more than two dozen U.S. and Iraqi joint operating

centers throughout the city. And now, perhaps most compellingly, in the

al-Anbar province in Ramadi, more than 20 of the Sunni sheik leaders

have come together to form what they call the Iraq Awakening Movement.

For the first time ever, Sunni leadership in the al-Anbar province are

standing with the American soldier and with the government of Nouri al-

Maliki.

Again, let me say, this is a tough time in Iraq. But we are in the

midst of

a strong backlash and counterattacks by insurgency in al Qaeda. We are

beginning to see the seedlings of hope in that war-torn country. I

truly believe we are making progress precisely because of the

President's surge strategy.

This war is not lost. And before I close tonight, I will reflect on

my heartfelt sentiment that I believe the American people know that

victory is our only option in Iraq, and I will urge this Congress to

give General Petraeus not only a willing ear tomorrow but also the

time, the resources, and the authority under his Commander in Chief to

secure a victory for freedom in Iraq.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the skepticism of my colleagues on

this point and perhaps even the skepticism of some who would be looking

in tonight. So let me stick tonight not so much with rhetoric or

semantics, but let's just talk about the facts on the ground in

Baghdad. Because it seems to me just, not as a Congressman, but as an

American, that most of the facts that I get in the popular debate in

America in the mainstream media have to do with the horrific

counterattacks that insurgents and al Qaeda are conducting in response

to the surge.

But I want to focus tonight, in the time that I have been allotted,

on the products of the surge, both militarily, both with regard to

security in Baghdad and in Ramadi, where I visited just 3 short weeks

ago, and also, in the political process which we all know ultimately

holds the solution to our impasse in Iraq.

Let me begin by saying, first and foremost, despite the difficulty of

our challenge in Iraq, we are seeing positive indicators under the

President's new strategy that we hope will turn into positive trends.

General Petraeus has been carrying out this new strategy now for just

over 2 months. He will not have the full complement of U.S. forces and

reinforcements on the ground in Baghdad for several months yet, which

makes all the more questionable those who would be prepared at this

point to announce withdrawal before the surge has been even fully

implemented in Iraq.

Iraqi and American forces are making incremental gains, specifically

in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad. And let me emphasize, President's

strategy, from the first time he outlined it to the Nation, from the

time, a few days before that what I and a handful of Members were in

the Cabinet Room and the President described his strategy for a surge

of military reinforcements.

This is not about sending in enough forces to provide military

control of the entire country of Iraq. President's strategy, the so-

called surge, actually found its origin in the Iraq Study Group report,

which, if memory serves, on page 74 in the published edition, actually

said that, and I quote, that the Iraq Study Group said that they would

support a temporary increase in forces or a surge in U.S. forces in

Baghdad to quell violence in the capital city, to make possible a

political solution.

Now, I know in the past, and perhaps even before the end of this

week, many of my colleagues who oppose the war will cite glowingly the

Iraq Study Group. But I will take whatever opportunity I have,

informally or formally, to respectfully point them to that page of the

Iraq Study Group report. The President's surge is a military strategy

designed to quell violence in the capital city of Baghdad, and, to no

less extent, in Ramadi and the al-Anbar Province.

The belief is that if we can, U.S. and Iraqi forces in the lead, if

we can quell violence in the capital city, we can create an environment

where the political process and a political settlement and, ultimately,

regionally a diplomatic settlement can take hold. And there is some

evidence that that surge strategy is beginning, just beginning to

deliver on the security that will make that political and diplomatic

settlement possible. The most significant element, therefore, of the

new strategy is being carried out in Baghdad.

Baghdad, it is widely known, was the site of most of the sectarian

violence in Iraq, and therefore it is the destination for most of our

reinforcements. At this point there are three additional American

brigades that have reached the Iraqi capital, and while another is in

Kuwait preparing to deploy, one more will arrive next month.

The Iraq Government, for its part, when I am home in Indiana I am

asked a lot about what are Iraqis doing for their own security as a

part of this surge and as a part of this war. Well, the Iraqi

Government is meeting its pledge to boost force levels in Baghdad.

Here is a jarring statistic, Mr. Speaker. For every U.S. combat

soldier deployed in Baghdad, there are now roughly three Iraqi military

forces deployed in Baghdad. Let me say that again. For every one

American combat force, for every American soldier, combat soldier

deployed in Baghdad, there are now roughly three soldiers as a part of

the Iraq Security Force deployed in Baghdad.

And American troops are now living and working side by side with

Iraqi forces. I actually had the chance to see it firsthand in our trip

to Baghdad; in fact, our trip to a joint operating center with General

David Petraeus on April 1. These neighborhood small outposts are called

joint security stations.

In fact, on this map, Mr. Speaker, we see the coalition's forward

operating bases in the fall of 2006. Here we see in the center of town

the international zone, so-called the Green Zone. Of course here is the

Baghdad international airport. And at this point, in fall of 2006,

roughly, these diagrams, these small triangles, 1, 2, 3 and 4

represented all of the forward operating bases in Baghdad.

Since the beginning of the surge, now, Mr. Speaker, there are 21, 21

combat outposts throughout Baghdad, and 26 joint security stations run

together with U.S. and Iraqi forces. These are seen as a key building

block in an effort to increase security for Baghdad's residents.

As I mentioned, we traveled out to the al Karada joint security

station during my April 1st trip to Baghdad. We helicoptered from the

Green Zone. We landed at the al Karada joint security station. These

joint stations, for all the world, they are like neighborhood police

stations. And U.S. forces, literally, on 2-week rotations, move to

these stations.

And it was very compelling to me to see U.S. and Iraqi forces side by

side when we arrived in this joint operating security station. And they

greeted us warmly, and we spoke with Iraqi military personnel; spoke,

of course, with American personnel.

And I remember one of the facts that stuck out in my mind was that

when they were building this particular joint operating center at al

Karada, right literally in downtown Baghdad, they offered, out of

respect to religious traditions, they offered the Iraqi forces, they

said, Well, you could have separate living forces from the U.S. forces

so that you wouldn't have to essentially bunk together. And it was the

Iraqi soldiers who said, Absolutely not. We want to bunk together with

the American forces. We want to, essentially, be in the same dorm with

them, and we are deploying with them every day.

And there is a tremendous sense for all the world, Mr. Speaker, of

esprit de corps that one gets when you see the American soldier and you

see the Iraqi soldier, as we did that day at the al Karada joint

security station.

Let me say again, I was unable to bring tonight, Mr. Speaker, a

diagram that would show all of the locations of the 26 joint security

stations that now dot the landscape of Baghdad, 26 stations that were

not there in the fall of 2006. Security issues would not permit me to

put that on, essentially, global television through C-SPAN coverage,

looking in.

But for all the world, if you can imagine, here we had four forward-

deployed stations in the Green Zone, and now, literally, I would mark

up this map into almost an incomprehensible state if I were to draw the

21 combat outposts and the 26 combat security stations that are now on

the ground in Baghdad.

Iraqi and American forces are working together. Specifically, not

only living at these stations, but deploying 24/7 to clear out and

secure neighborhoods. If a heavy fight breaks out, American forces step

in. Iraqi forces learn, side by side, valuable skills in fighting

shoulder to shoulder with our troops.

Iraqi and American forces have also, in the past 3 months, received

more

tips than during any 3-month period on record.

Baghdad is not safe; can we say that for the RECORD? But Baghdad is

safer because of the presence of U.S. and Iraqi forces throughout the

capital city. And an evidence of that, number one, is a sharp decline

in insurgent sectarian violence within the city of Baghdad, a sharp

decline which I mentioned in my opening comments.

But also evidence we can point to is more tips from people in Baghdad

than at any 3-month period on record. By living in Baghdad

neighborhoods, it is believed that American forces are getting to know

the culture, the concerns, the local residents.

I don't understand every operational profile of our presence in Iraq.

I have been there five different times. But my sense is, Mr. Speaker,

that prior to, essentially, the embedding of these joint security

stations throughout the capital city, American forces essentially would

deploy from one of our forward operating bases where there was a

problem, patrol, deal with the problem and go back to base. Now we go,

we stay. And that is what is being widely credited with two facts, one

good and one bad.

The first fact, as I have mentioned, and I will say again, there has

been a drop in sectarian violence in Baghdad, as well as in Ramadi,

which I will get to in a minute. That is the good news.

The bad news is that the enemy is fighting back in the form of

horrific bombings. We saw the bridge car bomb. We saw bombings against

unsecured marketplaces, particularly recently on the south and west of

Baghdad. Heartbreaking, violent acts by the enemy, which I believe give

evidence of the fact that we are taking the fight to the enemy and the

enemy is responding.

But again, let me say again, sectarian violence overall in Baghdad is

down in the first 2 months. And it gives us just an inkling of hope for

success of the surge.

Baghdad is not safer. But it is safer because of the presence of 26

joint operating centers where U.S. and Iraqi forces deploy and live

together and patrol the neighborhoods 24/7.

Now, let me speak a little bit about the al-Anbar Province, truly an

extraordinary experience from our time in Baghdad. Our delegation

traveled west into the al-Anbar Province, the capital of which is the

city of Ramadi. And Ramadi is a very dangerous place, Mr. Speaker. It

is a place where there has been a great and tremendous and consistent

insurgent presence.

Ramadi historically is where, frankly, most of the Sunni power in the

country was focused. Most of the wealth of Sunnis was concentrated in

Ramadi, and therefore the Sunni insurgency against the al-Maliki

government found much expression in violence in that city.

Here is a picture on the ground, unclassified, of the insurgent

presence in Ramadi, of just 2 months ago, the river passing through the

middle of town. I believe the U.S. military base is in this direction.

But just to give you a snapshot here, Mr. Speaker, you can see all of

this red area that shows insurgent presence in Ramadi. Quick snapshot,

the present picture in Ramadi is this. And again it is in direct

connection with the leadership of General Odierno, U.S. forces and

Iraqi forces employing exactly the same strategy that I just described

is being deployed in Baghdad, the deployment of joint security

stations, Iraqis and Americans working together.

Now, the city of Ramadi that was highly compromised 2 months ago with

insurgent presence, according to U.S. sources this would represent al

Qaeda in Iraq positions, now, according to official U.S. military

sources, now has been reduced in its scope to a relatively isolated

area of the city of Ramadi.

Well, how is that happening? Is it all about joint operating centers

and the military response?

Well, it certainly is a part of that. But I would also add, a great

deal has to do with a sea change that is taking place among Sunni

sheiks and Sunni leadership.

Remember, in the history of the three successive national elections

and referenda that took place in Iraq, for the most part, Sunnis, and

particularly Sunnis in al-Anbar Province, not only were opposed to

measures, but refused to participate in most cases.

Now, there has been a breakthrough in recent months, and we met with

a Sheik Sitar, a courageous man, roughly my age, who ended up, Mr.

Speaker, being featured for all the world on a 60 Minutes program a

week after we returned from Iraq, for all the world to see and hear his

own words.

We sat in a room with Sheik Sitar and we heard them describe what he

helped to found. It is called the Iraq Awakening Movement. The Iraq

Awakening Movement already includes 22 of 24 Ramadi-area Sunni tribes

that are now cooperating with U.S. and Iraqi forces.

Let me say that again; 22 of 24 Ramadi area tribes are now

cooperating with U.S. and Iraqi and coalition forces.

Sheikh Sattar himself has an extraordinary and compelling story. His

father was killed in his native town of Ramadi by al Qaeda. His two

brothers were killed by al Qaeda. And to hear him tell it, Sheikh

Sattar just said, That's enough, and began in the process with other

sheikhs and other tribal leaders throughout the Sunni population of

Ramadi and to say this is not going to happen like this anymore. And

they came to the American base in Ramadi and sat down with officials

and said, We want to figure out how to move forward.

He made comments that were echoed across the Nation on that ``60

Minutes'' CBS television program. And I commend Scott Pelley and I

commend CBS News for replaying his comments.

He looked at us across the table and spoke about the American

soldier. And I paraphrase now, Mr. Speaker, but Sheikh Sattar said,

Anyone who points a gun at an American soldier in Ramadi is pointing a

gun at an Iraqi. It was incredibly moving. He spoke of their gratitude

to the American soldier. And then he looked me right in the eye across

this small conference table at the U.S. military base in Ramadi, and he

said, Congressman, anyone who tells you the Iraqi people don't like

Americans is lying to you. And then he said with even greater emphasis,

Iraqis love Americans and, particularly, he added, the American

soldier. I don't have his words precisely correct, but it was very

moving to this small-town boy to hear a man roughly my age living in

this war-torn country who was now risking his life to stand with his

own nascent government, the al Maliki government, and to stand with

U.S. and coalition forces.

We are forward deployed. Much of the strategy that I described in

Baghdad we were told in Ramadi is being employed in Ramadi. But I think

something else is happening in the al-Anbar province: tribal sheikhs

cooperating with American and Iraqi forces to fight al Qaeda, providing

highly specific intelligence. We have sent more troops to the al-Anbar

province with these significant changes where presence of al Qaeda

terrorists in the city has declined significantly in the past 6 months,

as evidenced by these charts.

But it would be important to note, as I return to my original

graphic, that al Qaeda responds to these changes with sickening

brutality. But the local Sunnis in al-Anbar province and in Ramadi are

refusing to be intimidated, and they are stepping forward to drive out

terrorists.

We are cracking down on extremists also gathering in other parts of

Iraq, but as I conceded on a news program this afternoon, one of the

concerns that I heard, Mr. Speaker, from General Odierno in Ramadi and

General Petraeus in Baghdad was that as we move U.S. and Iraqi forces

into those major cities with a special emphasis on Baghdad, number one,

the enemy will fight back, and the horrific bombings of the past few

weeks are evidence that this enemy will not go quietly. But, number

two, the other, and we are seeing evidence of this already, is that the

al Qaeda and the insurgent elements, to the extent that we are able

systematically neighborhood by neighborhood to drive them out of those

major cities, that they will move into the outlying province, and we

are seeing evidence of that.

But let me say again the strategy here is not to go neighborhood by

neighborhood to secure the entire city of Baghdad. The President's

surge strategy is a clear hold-and-build strategy designed to provide

enough security in Baghdad and a critical area in

Ramadi to allow a political solution to take hold.

We can assume our enemies will continue to fight back. These are

ruthless, blood-thirsty killers who not only desire the power that

would come with a nation-state in Iraq, but they desire to do us harm

and to do harm to our posterity. They will continue to fight back. But

I believe there is evidence that this strategy to clear areas, to hold

them with the joint operating centers, again, 26 joint operating

centers throughout the city of Baghdad where American forces and Iraqi

forces are living and patrolling 24/7 is a strategy where we can

provide the kind of stability to facilitate the political and economic

progress that will make a lasting peace possible.

And let me speak to that. As we increase our troop levels, it is

vital that we also strengthen our civilian presence, provisional

reconstruction teams, organizations that restore basic services,

stimulate job creation, promote reconciliation.

I was at USAID yesterday. I met with Ambassador Tobias and learned

about the extraordinary efforts that are taking place to meet real and

human needs on the ground. I met in my office today with the head of

the Iraqi Red Crescent organization, an admirable organization modeled

in effect after the American Red Cross but built on the Muslim

tradition of the Crescent. The Iraqi Red Crescent is an organization

that day in and day out is answering the humanitarian crisis on the

ground in this violent and war-torn country.

Military operations are beginning to open up a breathing space,

though, for political progress, and therein lies the real hope, Mr.

Speaker. As we sat down with the foreign minister, seven members of the

cabinet, and the Vice President of Iraq over a long and lengthy and

brutally frank dinner in the ambassador's headquarters in the Green

Zone at the end of our day in Baghdad, we emphasized the need to move

forward on reconciliation, to move forward on an agreement that would

distribute the oil revenues equitably between all the ethnic groups in

Iraq. And, truthfully, as they reminded us, the Iraq legislature has

met some key milestones, met one benchmark by passing a budget that

commits $10 billion for reconstruction. The Council of Ministers

recently approved legislation that would provide a framework for an

equitable sharing of oil revenues.

Now that legislation will go before the Iraq Parliament for its

approval. The government has formed a committee to organize provincial

elections. And I want to say of the al-Anbar province, with Sunnis now

in the Iraq Awakening movement beginning to stand with U.S. and Iraqi

forces and the al Maliki government, we urged them very strongly to

move as quickly as possible toward provincial elections with the

expectation that Sunnis in the al-Anbar province and in other provinces

of the country would, in many cases for the first time, participate and

take ownership in the electoral and the governing process.

The Iraqi cabinet, as they reminded us, are all taking steps to

finalize toward agreement on a de-Baathification law. And in a

conference in Egypt next month, Prime Minister Maliki will seek

increased diplomatic and financial commitments for Iraq's democracy.

Ultimately, let me say as clearly as I can, during these difficult

days for the war in Iraq, the answer in Iraq is not exclusively

military, but we must provide the military support to give the al

Maliki government and this nascent democracy the capacity to defend its

capital. To defend its capital is at the very essence of the

credibility of any government. And given the opportunity to provide

basic services and basic security in Baghdad, we believe that all of

these objectives could move forward, not only internally in Iraq. The

de-Baathification law, oil revenue sharing agreement, provincial

elections, all of which would contribute to a widening sense of

ownership in this new democracy, but also it would provide an

opportunity where Iraq could begin, as it has just recently begun, to

reach out to its neighbors with the United States already at the table.

Even with countries greatly antagonistic to our interests in the

region, the United States has been willing to sit down and begin to

facilitate the achievement of a diplomatic solution.

The truth is that giving up on Iraq would have consequences far

beyond Iraq's borders, and there may be time before the end of this

week and before the end of this debate to expand on that. But let me

just say emphatically, Mr. Speaker, that withdrawal is not a strategy.

Withdrawal would do nothing to prevent violence from spilling out

across the country and plunging Iraq into chaos and anarchy.

In fact, when I asked the leader of the Iraq Red Crescent movement

today what a precipitous and early withdrawal of U.S. forces would

mean, he painted a frightening picture of a humanitarian crisis, true

civil conflict and strife, potentially widening into a wider regional

war generated by the instability and uncertainty in Iraq.

But that being said, let me speak, if I can, in my time remaining, of

the proposal that we will consider this week on the floor of the

Congress. And that is what I have described in the past as the Democrat

plan for retreat and defeat in Iraq. I wanted to come to the floor

tonight, Mr. Speaker, to basically share what General David Petraeus

shared with me in Baghdad and just the seedlings, the very beginning of

hope, that the President's planned surge is beginning to produce modest

progress in Iraq.

But let me say again at the outset, it is easy to be understood in

this debate, it is a tough time in Iraq; but despite a recent wave of

insurgent bombings, this war is not lost, and Congress would do well to

reflect very deeply on the real facts on the ground, not the images in

the media, but the real facts on the ground that I have recited

tonight, that General Petraeus will recite to Members tomorrow, before

we make a decision to embrace a plan contemplated by House and Senate

agreement, a $124 billion spending plan expected to come to the floor

with the goal of bringing U.S. troops home beginning July of this year

and ending U.S. combat operations no later than March of 2008.

When I think of the Democrat plan in the midst of this hard-fought

effort, street by street, the sacrifices that American and Iraqi

soldiers are making, and the fact that both in Baghdad and in Ramadi

sectarian violence is down. Despite the horrific bombing, sectarian

violence is down. Cooperation in the form of tips is increasing. We are

just beginning to see the inklings of hope in Iraq. And yet the

Democrat majority will bring forward a proposal that would micromanage

it, deadlines for withdrawal. For all the world, that makes me think of

George Orwell, who said:

And I really do believe the Democrat plan is a prescription for

retreat and defeat.

Now, let me speak about the proper role of Congress in this context.

And I think it speaks of the great wisdom of our Founders that

Congress, as a body of 435 otherwise well-intentioned men and women, is

not particularly well suited to the conduct of war. In fact, at the

Constitutional Convention, almost no issue was more summarily dealt

with than what our Founders referred to as war by committee. They

feared it. Their experience was derived from stories of the

Revolutionary War as General Washington was chased from New York all

the way across New Jersey, facing almost certain defeat in the

Philadelphia suburbs across the river, the Delaware.

Every single night, General Washington would later record that he

would sit in his tent and write letter after letter to Congress asking

for appropriations, asking for support, asking for details.

As our founders put together the Constitution of the United States,

they said there would be one Commander in Chief, and that would be the

President of the United States of America; and that we would not have

war by committee. And the Constitution is more clear on no other fact.

Congress can declare war, Congress can choose to fund or not to fund

military operations, but Congress cannot conduct war. In fact, those

times in American history where Congress has intruded itself on the

purview of the Commander in Chief have been marked as summarily

perilous times.

I am recently reading up on the committee in this Congress during the

Civil War. I think it was loosely entitled ``The Committee on the

Conduct of

the War.'' And it was a committee in Congress that did not just attend

itself to President Lincoln's use of public assets and funding of the

war, but it involved itself well into recommendations about military

operations and the like. It would be none other than Robert E. Lee, the

leader of the Army of the Confederacy, who would say,

Robert E. Lee, leading the

Army of the Confederacy, would say that the Committee on the Conduct of

the War, functioning in Congress, was worth two divisions to him. And

yet, we will see this majority bring forward a measure that I believe

violates both common sense, the Constitution and our history with a

plan for withdrawal from Iraq. And a message of withdrawal at a time

when we are just beginning, in the midst of horrific counterattacks by

the enemy, where we are just beginning to see evidence of modest

progress from the surge, I think is precisely the wrong message to

send.

But on this constitutional argument it is worth noting that it would

not simply be my reading of history and the Constitution that would

criticize the plan for a timetable for withdrawal included in the war

funding bill this week, but let me quote, if I may, Mr. Speaker, an

editorial in the Los Angeles Times that was published in the month of

March under the heading, Their

main point was, in effect,

That newspaper went on to say, and I

am quoting now the Los Angeles Times,

The L.A. Times said,

They go on.

They add,

so wrote the left column lead editorial in the L.A. Times

in March. Not exactly a ringing endorsement from the editorial board of

record in the home State of Speaker Pelosi.

And about the same time the Washington Post, really another lion of

the liberal media in America, wrote in a lead editorial entitled,

the following:

They wrote,

So wrote the

editorial in the Washington Post.

You know, it really is amazing sometimes how politics, common sense

and the Constitution can make such strange bedfellows. I don't think

I've ever come to the floor of this House and quoted in any length the

lead editorial in either the Washington Post or the L.A. Times, but I

do so approvingly this evening. In both cases, these newspapers

identified what I asserted at the beginning, that the Democrats should

heed the call of the Constitution and common sense and reject the

Pelosi plan for retreat-defeat in Iraq. They should reject it on the

basis of our history and Constitution, but they should also reject it

because, as General Petraeus will describe to our colleagues tomorrow,

in the midst of horrific counterattacks by our enemy, there is evidence

of modest progress on the ground. Sectarian violence is down in Baghdad

and Ramadi. Cooperation among civilians is up. And I say once again,

where there once were four forward operating bases in the fall of 2006

in Baghdad proper, now, like the joint security station I visited on

April 1st in downtown Baghdad, now there are 26 joint operating

stations throughout Baghdad, almost as many, I'm told, in Ramadi, where

U.S. and Iraqi forces are living together 2 weeks at a stretch and

deploying and patrolling neighborhoods 24/7. This is exactly not the

time to embrace arbitrary timetables for withdrawal, or for Congress to

tell our generals on the ground how to conduct the war.

I believe in my heart of hearts that the American people know that we

have but one choice in Iraq, that victory is our only real option. And

let me say this again; if I am repetitive tonight, Mr. Speaker, it is

intentional. I mean to be understood.

This is a tough time in Iraq. As General Petraeus comes to Capitol

Hill this week, I expect that he will tell our colleagues what he told

me and Members of the House and Senate on the streets of Baghdad just 3

short weeks ago. And that is that, despite a recent wave of insurgent

bombings, counterattacks by the enemy responding to our surge on the

ground, this war is not lost. In fact, because of the President's surge

and the brave conduct of U.S. and Iraqi forces on the ground, we are

making modest progress in Iraq.

In Baghdad, despite the recent bombings, sectarian violence is down.

Baghdad is not safe, but it is safer because of the presence of 26

joint operating stations where U.S. and Iraqi forces are deployed. And

as I mentioned earlier, the extraordinary developments in Ramadi, which

has seen a precipitous decline in the last 2 months in sectarian

violence, and also has seen 22 of 24 Ramadi-area Sunni tribes now

cooperating and supporting U.S. forces and supporting the new al-Maliki

government is truly an extraordinary development, to say the least.

I believe in my heart that the American people know that victory is

our only option. And I just began recently, Mr. Speaker, rereading a

biography that you might well approve of. It is the David McCollough

biography of President Harry Truman. I have appropriated a few quotes

by President Truman that I found particularly compelling and

particularly appropriate at this time, and I will quote them with

respect because I think they speak to our time, which is a tough time

in Iraq, and a hard time for an American people that have little

interest, almost at the level of our DNA.

We are not a Nation interested in foreign entanglements. We are not

an empire-building Nation. And throughout our history, we have quickly

grown weary of long-term foreign entanglements. So this is a hard time

at home, it is a hard time on the ground. We are taking the battle with

the enemy with the President's surge, and the enemy is fighting back.

President Truman faced such times, difficult days both in his

personal career and as a wartime President. So I will reflect on his

words and that of a leader of another country in difficult times as I

reflect what I think is very close to the character of this Nation.

Harry S. Truman said,

That was advice he gave to Hubert Humphrey in September of

1964.

In 1945, President Truman said,

President Truman went on

to say,

President Harry Truman said in 1945.

And for those who would embrace withdrawal as a means of achieving

peace, President Truman says out of history, quote,

And I would argue the absence of U.S.

forces in Iraq is not peace; it is a prescription for anarchy.

I would also appropriate from history as I speak to what I truly

believe in my heart is at the very core of the American identity, and

that upon which we

must avail ourselves during this time of testing in the war on terror,

and they are the words of Sir Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of

England, and a man considered by many to be the greatest leader of the

free world in the 20th century. He gives us words that I believe speak

to our time. And I quote,

Winston Churchill would also say, ``You ask, `What is our policy?' I

will say it is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might

and all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a

monstrous tyranny never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalog of

human crime. That is our policy.

``You ask, `What is our aim?' I can answer with one word: Victory--

victory at all costs, victory in spite of terror, victory however long

and hard the road may be. For without victory, there is no survival.''

And of our time, where many of our countrymen would wish away this

war-torn part of the world, I can't help but think that this quote is

appropriate. Sir Winston Churchill said, ``One ought never to turn

one's back on a threatened danger or try to run away from it. If you

do, that will double the danger; but if you meet it promptly and

without flinching, you will reduce it by half.''

These are difficult days in Iraq. Sacrifices that American forces and

their families are making are deeply humbling to me and to every Member

of Congress and, I believe, of the American people. But I believe that,

despite the recent wave of insurgent bombings, this war is not lost. In

fact, because of the President's surge and the bold leadership of

General David Petraeus in Baghdad and General Odierno in Ramadi, our

U.S. forces on the ground, in combination with Iraqi forces, we are

beginning to see modest progress in Iraq.

In Baghdad, despite recent bombings, sectarian violence overall is

down, and the same is true in Ramadi. Baghdad is not safe, but it is

safer because of the deployment of 26 joint operating centers

throughout the city. A city where there once were simply an

International Green Zone, the Baghdad Victory Base, and four forward-

operating bases in Baghdad, now throughout the city, in form when I

visited them on April 1 in Baghdad for all the world looked like

neighborhood police stations. They call them joint operating centers,

where U.S. and Iraqi forces live together, work together, eat together

and deploy together, in 2-week rotations. And it is making a difference

on the ground.

In the al Anbar province in Ramadi, it is extraordinary to say 22 of

the 24 Sunni tribal leaders, led in part by Sheikh Sattar, with whom I

spent one of the most memorable hours of my life on April 2 earlier

this month, Sunni leadership is standing with the al Maliki government,

standing with the American soldier, rejecting the insurgency, rejecting

al Qaeda, and reclaiming their city and their country for peace and

security.

We have a long way to go, but not that long before we know whether

this new surge strategy will work. I believe it is imperative that

Congress give General Petraeus not only a willing ear tomorrow when he

comes to Capitol Hill, but I think it is high time that we sent the

President a clean bill, take out all the micromanagement of the war,

all the unconstitutional benchmarks and datelines for withdrawal, for

that matter, take out all the pork-barrel spending that has nothing to

do with our military, and send General Petraeus and our soldiers on the

ground the resources they need to get the job done and come home.

You know, I was asked by a soldier in Ramadi, a soldier from Indiana,

he looked at me and he said, Congressman, I just want to ask you an

honest question. He said, When is it going to be enough? When are we

going to have been here long enough? And I said to him with great

humility, I said, Son, I will answer this as straight with you as I

can: I think we have to stick around here until these people can defend

themselves, and not a minute longer.

That is what we need to accomplish, Mr. Speaker. We need to stick

around long enough to help Iraqi security forces provide the basic

stability in their capital and in the critical al Anbar province, and

particularly in Ramadi, in order that the political process and the

diplomatic process regionally can go forward. And then, like Americans

of past generations, we can pick up and go home, and only ask for a

debt of friendship in return.

It is a time of testing for our country. It is not a time for

shrinking back. But based on the evidence, the facts that General

Petraeus shared with me in Baghdad and will share with us on Capitol

Hill, it is time to give the surge a chance to succeed.

The Congress will likely pass a supplemental bill that will have

unconstitutional benchmarks and datelines for withdrawal. The President

of the United States will keep his word. He will promptly veto that

legislation. But my hope, and, candidly, Mr. Speaker, my prayer, is

that after we have gone through this exercise and Congress has made its

importance felt, we will get our soldiers the resources they need and

we will give them the time and the freedom to succeed in this surge.

But there are no guarantees. We are up against a ruthless and brutal

enemy, who even this very day claimed American lives in another

ruthless suicide car bomb attack.

I believe it would be a stain on our national character that we would

not wipe off for generations if we were to walk away now; if we were

simply to say to the good people of Iraq, hundreds of which I have had

the chance to meet and to speak with over my five journeys there over

the last 4 years of this war, it would be a stain on our national

character to that generation of Iraqis to leave them unable to defend

themselves, to harvest a whirlwind of sectarian violence, revenge

killings, and to leave them to become a part of a country that would

become subjugated by the blood-sworn enemies of the United States of

America. And it would be a stain on our national character to leave

Iraq, in effect, worse off than how we found it.

As bad as it was under Saddam Hussein, I can't help but believe that

if those who fight us in the form of the insurgency and al Qaeda today

gain the reins of control in that Nation, that we will, as Winston

Churchill said, we will double the danger, and our children and our

children's children will pay a price we dare not imagine.

So we are faced with choices today, and my challenge to my colleagues

and to any looking on is to listen to the facts, not the adjectives,

not the ``spin,'' as it is referred to in the popular debate, but

listen to the facts. And the facts are that it is a tough time in Iraq.

We are facing a determined enemy. But that despite a recent wave of

insurgent bombings, this war is not lost.

In fact, because of the President's surge and the extraordinary

courage of U.S. and Iraqi forces, we are making modest progress in

Iraq. In Baghdad, despite recent bombings, sectarian violence is down.

Baghdad is not safe, but it is safer because of the presence of more

than two dozen U.S. and Iraqi joint operating centers. And now 22 of 24

Sunni sheikhs and tribal leaders have come together in Ramadi and the

al Anbar province to support the al Maliki government and U.S. forces.

Let's give General Petraeus a willing ear. Let's listen to the facts.

And then let us reject timetables for withdrawal, pork-barrel-laden

spending bills, and simply provide our soldiers the resources they need

to get the job done and come home safe.

I believe that we can secure victory for freedom in Iraq, and in so

doing we will deliver a victory for freedom, not only for the Iraqi

people, but for ourselves and our posterity. We will unleash, as the

President has spoken so eloquently, the forces of freedom and stability

in a part of the world that has known little of either. That is my

hope, and that is my prayer.