Mr. Speaker, sadly, many people try to

separate the current Iraq conflict from the attacks of September 11 and

the Global War on Terrorism; it is impossible to do so. The attacks of

September 11 were not isolated, random events. Al Qaeda has openly

stated Iraq is the central front in the war on terror. And our enemy is

highly intelligent, well financed and committed to the destruction of

freedoms.

The concept that America's retreat in Iraq will bring an end to

sectarian violence and terrorist activity in the region ignores

history. Premature retreat will embolden the enemy and make us more

vulnerable to attacks. Withdrawals from Beirut and Mogadishu led to the

1993 World Trade Center attack, the 1998 embassy bombings across

Africa, the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole, and then September 11. Osama

bin Laden has characterized the struggle in Iraq as the third world

war. We ignore this claim at our peril, which threatens American

families.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget

September 11.