Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the 2,600

men and women of the Minnesota National Guard who, after serving our

country with great honor and courage, are returning home from their 16-

month deployment to Iraq.

Last Friday my friend and colleague, Congressman Tim Walz, and I had

the privilege of visiting Volk Field near Fort McCoy in Wisconsin and

welcoming home soldiers from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry

Division, the famed ``Red Bulls.'' It was truly a memorable experience

greeting these proud soldiers as they returned from the longest combat

deployment of any Army brigade combat team in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Minnesota's ``Red Bulls'' escorted supply convoys and traveled 2.4

million miles in Iraq. Other members of the BCT provided essential

security to U.S. bases throughout the country.

Speaking with the fine men and women of the ``Red Bulls'' as they

stepped off the plane and smelled that clean, fresh air and stepped on

American soil, it became clear that these soldiers are justifiably

proud of their accomplishments. The great State of Minnesota and all

Americans can be proud as well.