Mr. Speaker, the topic of my Special

Order this evening, and I think I will be joined by other Members from

both sides, is our recent trip to Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan,

and our military hospital for our troops in Germany. But before I get

into my comments about the trip, let me put some specific quotes from

Dr. Kay, who has just been referred to by a previous speaker, who made

the allegation that Dr. Kay said there was no basis for our activity in

Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, let me put the actual quote in the Record, not something

that is paraphrasing, but the actual quote. In an interview that Dr.

Kay conducted on NBC TV, he was asked to comment on whether it was

prudent to go to war. Dr. Kay said, ``I think it was absolutely

prudent. In fact, I think at the end of the inspection process, we will

paint a picture of Iraq that was far more dangerous than we even

thought it was before the war.''

Mr. Speaker, that is not me paraphrasing; that is not me summarizing

or putting my own spin on what Dr. Kay said. That is a direct quote

from Dr. Kay, and the American people and our colleagues need to

understand that as we analyze what has been said in the findings of the

Kay report, that we actually look at those statements, as opposed to

trying to spin them. Some of our colleagues on the other side,

especially those running for the Presidency, have tried to put a spin

on what Dr. Kay said. It is more important for the American people and

for our colleagues to look at in actuality what he said.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is one more point I want to make on this

whole effort of the spin of Dr. Kay, which ties into our trip, because

of the 45 meetings that we held over the 7 days, visiting eight

different countries and traveling 25,500 miles in military aircraft,

including a military aircraft to get over, a Navy plane, C-130s and

Blackhawk helicopters in Iraq, I think the most significant meeting we

had was in Iraq, and that meeting was with the individual who is

actually responsible for the Iraqi Survey Group, which is actually

doing the search for weapons of mass destruction.

Now, Mr. Speaker, many of our colleagues in this room and many of the

people around America have been convinced by the media that Dr. Kay was

in charge of the investigation for weapons of mass destruction. Mr.

Speaker, that is wrong. Dr. Kay was a consultant to the general who was

in charge of the Iraq Survey Group, and that general is a two star

general by the name of Keith Dayton.

On our trip to Iraq, in Baghdad we were taken to the Fusion Center,

where all of the intelligence is brought for the Iraqi Survey Group to

do their work, and for 90 minutes members of the Republican Party and

the Democrat Party who were a part of my bipartisan delegation had a

chance to listen to the actual leader of the inspection process in Iraq

give us an update.

I want to share with our colleagues, Mr. Speaker, what General Dayton

said. First of all, he was perplexed. He was frustrated. He could not

understand why David Kay came back to America and made this public

report when he had not yet, first of all, talked to the individual who

was responsible for the Iraqi inspection process, General Dayton. In

fact, all of the individuals that we met who were overseeing the 1,500

people who are involved in the Iraq survey team were equally

frustrated.

We learned, for instance, that when David Kay left Iraq, he was not

entirely happy, because he was dissatisfied that General Dayton had

other missions besides the search for weapons of mass destruction and

actually had troops assigned to efforts like looking for our POW-MIA

Scott Spiker, and also were involved in the anti-terrorism efforts on

the ground. David Kay became upset and told this to General Dayton,

that there were assets being diverted away from his efforts to look for

weapons of mass destruction. That was one of the reasons why David Kay

left the Iraqi theater to come back to America.

Mr. Speaker, I have not seen that in the American media. I have not

heard that story yet brought forward. But the individual in charge of

the Iraq Survey Group, General Keith Dayton, told us that when we had

our meeting with him in Baghdad.

Mr. Speaker, we also learned that Dr. Kay had not been in Iraq for

the last several months, during which time he could have had an

exchange, an update of the work that was being done by the Iraq Survey

Group. So, Mr. Speaker, I think it is essentially important that we

take an additional step here.

Now, Dr. Kay has issued a report that I think stands on its own and

speaks for itself. It does not help when Members of this body or the

media or candidates for the Presidency misinterpret what David Kay

said. But we need to go beyond that, Mr. Speaker. We need to bring over

the individual who was actually responsible for the weapons of mass

destruction search in Iraq. That is not Dr. Kay; that is General Keith

Dayton. General Dayton has that responsibility, and it is he who

oversees those 1,500 people.

General Dayton told us that they are in fact enthusiastic about the

work they are doing. He explained to us the process now under way to

send teams into the rivers of Iraq, the lakes of Iraq, the bodies of

water where they have leads that perhaps weapons of mass destruction

were dumped, and they are now conducting that search.

They also told us, General Dayton and his colleagues, that there are

literally millions of pages and volumes of documents that have yet to

be searched that can provide leads as to where weapons of mass

destruction might be.

I can tell you after visiting the ``spider hole'' up in Takrit where

Saddam Hussein was holed up for a number of days, that our military

personnel went over top of that site a dozen times and never found

Saddam Hussein. Now, that hole was rather large. So if we could not

find a hole with Saddam in it for 8 or 9 months, then I think we

certainly owe it to General Dayton to give him the time to continue the

search for the evidence that he thinks in fact his team can come up

with.

So the point is, Mr. Speaker, that on this meeting in Iraq with the

general in charge of the survey team for weapons of mass destruction,

we got a clearly different picture from that that is being portrayed by

the American media, both in terms of Dr. Kay's report and the spin that

has been made on that report.

Today, Mr. Speaker, Secretary Rumsfeld appeared before our Committee

on Armed Services in the House, and I was the first Member of Congress

that was invited to ask questions of Secretary Rumsfeld. I laid all of

this out to him, and I asked him if he did not think it was time to do

what the famous media person, Paul Harvey, used to say at the end of

his stories: and now we will hear the other half of the story.

Mr. Speaker, today I requested of Secretary Rumsfeld that Major

General Keith Dayton be brought back to America to testify before the

Congress about the work that he is directing right now on looking for

weapons of mass destruction. Then Members of Congress can ask him about

the conditions under which David Kay operated, that he was in fact a

consultant to General Dayton. Then we can ask the questions about the

circumstances under which Dr. Kay left Iraq. Was there friction? What

was that friction? Then we can ask the most important question for the

American people of a two star general who is apolitical and is not

going to put any kind of a spin on his statement, What is your current

effort in Iraq and do you expect and do you anticipate the ability to

find weapons of mass destruction over the next several months?

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, what he told us unconditionally is that

they are very much into this search. It has not ended; it is not

winding down. In fact, they have placed more in the way of assets and

resources into the search for weapons of mass destruction.

Now, oftentimes in this city we do not pay attention to the facts. We

try to spin things. So I think it is extremely important that we bring

over General Keith Dayton to give us a firsthand accounting of the

search for weapons of mass destruction and to give us the other half of

the story to the findings of Dr. Kay, who was a consultant to General

Dayton.

Mr. Speaker, let me get back to the trip that we took, the bipartisan

trip, which in fact was the first trip to Libya by Americans since

1969.

My job as a member of the Committee on Armed Services for the past 17

years has been to make sure that we give our military the best

equipment, the best technology, and the best training to allow them to

continue to be the best military on the face of the Earth, and we have

done that. I am a self-described hawk in terms of supporting our

military.

But, Mr. Speaker, as the vice chairman of the Committee on Armed

Services, I consider my number one priority to be the avoidance of war,

because war has always got to be the last choice, because when we

commit our troops to war, then we put America's sons and daughters into

harm's way, knowing full well that some or perhaps many of them will

not return to their families.

So over the past 17 years, while serving on the Committee on Armed

Services, making sure our military has the equipment they need, is

properly trained, and has the financial support that they deserve, I

have spent an equal amount of time on the proliferation of weapons of

mass destruction technology and trying to find ways to take those

enemies of ours and those would-be enemies of ours and turn them into,

if not allies, at least countries that we can work with.

My primary focus has been with the former Soviet states, where I have

traveled almost 35 times and established a relationship with the

parliaments of all of those former nations that were once a part of the

Soviet Union. For the past 13 years, with my colleague, the gentleman

from Maryland (Mr. Hoyer), we have co-chaired a formal effort with the

Duma in the Russian Government, the legislative body of that country,

to establish a close relationship of friends and partners. We have had

some ups and downs, but the fact is that we are still working

aggressively together.

We have done the same thing with Ukraine, with the Rada; with

Moldova, with the Parliament; with Georgia,

with their Parliament; with Azerbaijan and with Armenia. We have done

it with Uzbekistan, and we are now reaching out to other countries that

were once a part of the Soviet Union to bring all of those countries

into a level of cooperation and understanding with us.

Mr. Speaker, the Soviet Union and its republics were the source of

much of the technology that ended up in the hands of the Libyans, the

Iraqis, the Iranians, the North Koreans and the Syrians. In fact, Mr.

Speaker, during the 1990s, I must have given 100 speeches on what we

saw occurring on a regular basis, the transfer of technology from

Russia and China and those former Soviet states into the hands of those

five countries that I just mentioned. Time and again there were

violations of arms control agreements. But the response of the

administration in the nineties was to pretend we did not see it,

because the administration was more concerned with keeping Boris

Yeltsin in power, even when the people of Russia had come to believe

that he was no longer a credible leader for their nation.

Mr. Speaker, we did the same thing in reaching out to other

countries, like China, that in fact were heading towards a course of

perhaps being an enemy of the U.S.; leading six delegations to that

Nation; being the only elected official asked to speak two times at the

National Defense University of the People's Liberation Army in Beijing.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, last May, after 2 years of planning, I was

proud to take the first delegation of Members of Congress, again a

bipartisan delegation, into Pyongyang, North Korea, the goal there

being to support the President and continuing the dialogue of the six

nations to eventually resolve the conflict between North Korea, South

Korea and the rest of the world.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, following the next round of six-way talks at

the end of this month, I will again lead a delegation back into North

Korea to continue a positive effort to support our President in finding

a peaceful solution to the Korean nuclear crisis, again to avoid war,

because of the consequence of putting America's sons and daughters into

harm's way.

Now, I also fully realize, Mr. Speaker, that that is not always

possible, and one case in point was Iraq. We gave Saddam Hussein 18

chances to abide by U.N. resolutions, 18 opportunities to come clean,

to basically come forward and tell the world what he had been doing.

And the response of Saddam Hussein was to thumb his nose at us and at

the rest of the world and to defy the world community. As a result, the

President was left with no choice when he asked us to support him in a

resolution of war.

For the life of me, Mr. Speaker, I cannot understand the logic of

those in this body and the leader of France, Jacques Chirac, and the

leader of Germany Gerhard Schroeder who criticized President Bush for

going into Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein. Because what is interesting

is, just 4 short years ago, many of these same people criticizing

President Bush from this body, as well as Jacques Chirac and Gerhard

Schroeder, were the very individuals pushing Bill Clinton into a war in

Yugoslavia to remove Milosevic from power. And guess what, Mr. Speaker?

When Schroeder and Chirac and some of the Members of this body who are

criticizing President Bush pushed Bill Clinton into an armed conflict,

they did not go to the U.N. for a resolution, because they knew full

well that Russia would veto any such resolution of the Security

Council. So what did they do? Bill Clinton, Gerhard Schroeder, and

Jacques Chirac, supported by many of those in this body who have been

criticizing President Bush, did not go to the U.N. as George Bush did,

they went to NATO.

Now, Mr. Speaker, NATO is a defensive body. It was organized as a

defensive entity to defend Europe and the NATO countries from an attack

by a nation like the Soviet Union. NATO was never meant to be an

offensive organization. But in 1999, many of those same people,

including many of those Democrat candidates for President today, were

out there supporting Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schroeder and Bill

Clinton in using NATO for the first and only time ever in its history

as an offensive invasion force into a non NATO country.

So we invaded Yugoslavia. We bombed Serbia. We removed Milosevic, who

was a war criminal. But what is so confusing to me, Mr. Speaker, is

that those same people who were on Bill Clinton's band wagon to invade

Serbia and Yugoslavia because Milosevic was a war criminal, all of a

sudden, having supported George Bush, even though he went to the U.N.

for the 17th and 18th time, even though Saddam Hussein has been

characterized by everyone, from Max Vanderstadt, the U.N. Human Rights

Advisor, to Amnesty International as the worst human rights abuser

since Adolf Hitler, did not want to support the effort in Iraq. Sounds

like politics to me, Mr. Speaker. It does not sound like much

consistency or substance.

How can you be for removing a war criminal like Milosevic from power

and not going through the U.N., but using NATO as an offensive force,

and then 4 years later, criticize President Bush after having gone to

NATO for the 17th and 18th time, after having given Saddam Hussein

every opportunity, and then, in the end, who decided we had to remove

this war criminal, this user of weapons of mass destruction, as he did

against the Kurds, as he did against the Iranians, from power. It does

not make sense to me, Mr. Speaker, unless, of course, you add in the

political equation.

But again, in that case, I thought the military action was justified,

but I would say in the case of North Korea and Libya and perhaps Iran,

if we can avoid conflict, we should take every opportunity to explore

that to its end.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, almost a year ago, at a conference on world

energy issues in Houston, Texas, I challenged major international

energy corporations to come together and establish an International

Energy Advisory Council, to specifically focus on the use of energy as

a mechanism to avoid war and as a mechanism to help us solve regional

conflicts that could lead to major escalations of war. That group,

headed up by Jeffrey Waterers, had an initial meeting in Washington,

D.C. in July in the Rayburn Office Building, where Chalabi came over

from Iraq and spoke to the energy leaders about Iraq postwar. We had

major leaders from the State Department and DOD came into speak, and

allowed the energy corporations, including those from Iraq and Iran, to

come together and see if energy could not provide a partial solution to

the crisis both in Iraq as well as other crises around the world.

In October, a second forum was held in London, again attended by all

of the major leaders around the world in the energy industry, which I

could not attend. But following that meeting, I set up a private

meeting with Colonel Gadhafi's son, Saif al Saleem al Gadhafi, a 34-

year-old, London-educated, Ph.D. candidate at the London School of

Economics, who today is apparently, according to some pundits, in line

to succeed his father as the leader of Libya.

I wanted to meet this individual, because we had mutual interests, to

see whether or not there was a possibility of breaking new ground with

Libya politically, of seeing whether or not there would be a movement

away from the policies of the past, which I had heard to be rumored

back in the middle part of last year, unaware of what was happening

with our own private discussions within our government. In January of

this year, the meeting with Saif al Gadhafi took place. He and I had a

long discussion. We talked about Libya's past relationship with the

U.S. and the West. We talked about the horrible bombings, the terrible

tragedy of Lockerbie, the bombings in Berlin, the linkage of Libyan

state-sponsored terrorism, and I told Saif, we can never forgive and

never forget. Likewise, he told me it was difficult for he and his

father to forget that we had bombed their home and in fact killed his

1\1/2\ year old sister. But we both said it was time to look to the

future as opposed to the past.

But Saif was one who was looking to settle the past problems with the

Lockerbie victims' families, to look at putting to rest those issues

where Libya had done horrible things, and that perhaps it was time to

move into a new direction. So he invited me to

bring a delegation of our colleagues to Tripoli. I said I would gladly

take that invitation. Two days later, a formal written invitation came

to my office in Washington from the chairman of the People's Congress

in Libya, inviting me to bring a delegation in. We secured a military

plane and we decided our trip would involve not just Libya, but a trip

that the White House had been encouraging me to take with Members to

Iraq and Afghanistan.

So the plane was secured, and from the Speaker's list of Members who

were asked to go to Libya and Afghanistan, we assembled a delegation, a

bipartisan delegation, including my good friend, the gentleman from

Texas (Mr. Ortiz) who would have been here tonight, but he had a death

of a close friend and is down back in his district; the gentleman from

New York (Mr. Israel), a Democrat; the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr.

Alexander), a Democrat; the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. Miller), a

Republican; the gentleman from California (Mr. Gallegly), a Republican;

the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Souder), a Republican; and the

gentleman from California (Mr. Issa), a Republican. The gentlemen from

California (Mr. Gallegly) and (Mr. Issa) joined us the day before we

left. They were not a part of the delegation going on to Iraq and

Afghanistan; they only joined us for the Libyan portion of the trip.

And I would say, Mr. Speaker, any Member of Congress could have come

with us on that trip into Libya. We had over 100 empty seats on our

aircraft. So any Member of Congress could have joined us if they had

just called and expressed an interest, as the gentlemen from California

did the day before we left.

Mr. Speaker, our trip to Libya and the other countries was

exhausting. As I mentioned earlier, we traveled 25,500 miles, we

visited 8 countries, and we had 45 meetings. Members of our delegation

on some nights got less than 2 hours sleep. When we arrived in Kuwait,

before going into Iraq, we arrived at 4 o'clock in the morning from our

plane, got to our hotel and had to be up at 6 o'clock in the morning

for the military to take us into Baghdad. So I want to congratulate the

members of the delegation that were on this trip because of their

outstanding service to the country in performing an extremely difficult

task, completing the mission that we set out for ourselves.

But I want to talk specifically about what we actually did and, in

the end, I will ask to put our trip report in the Congressional Record.

We did not know what to expect in Libya, Mr. Speaker, because no one

had been there from our country for the past 35 years. We were not sure

what the response would be. In fact, we were told by the White House

and the National Security Council that the Libyans did not want any

presence of the U.S., they certainly did not want to see the flag

flown, and they did not want America in any way displayed because it

would upset the people of the country. In fact, up until the 11th hour,

they did not want us to land our military plane at the Tripoli Airport.

How wrong they were.

When we arrived in Tripoli, Mr. Speaker, and our plane pulled up to

the tarmac, the number one spot in front of the air terminal at the

main Tripoli Airport, there was a whole core of individuals from the

leadership of Libya waiting to meet us. Officials from the government

of the country, the foreign ministry, the people's Congress, all out

there welcoming the Americans back to their nation. In fact, there was

a huge media entourage, TV cameras, reporters who were there to ask us

questions about why we were there and to follow us through our initial

meeting which was held in the lobby of the Tripoli Airport.

The welcome was unbelievable; unbelievably positive. As we sat down

and talked about our agenda for the 2 days we were going to be there, I

had asked for less than a dozen meetings. Mr. Speaker, not only was

every meeting that I asked for granted to us, but they even went beyond

and gave us meetings we had not asked for. We met with the Prime

Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Vice Prime Minister, the

Foreign Minister, the minister in charge of removing weapons of mass

destruction from Libya. We met with the foundation established by Saif

al Gadhafi, the same foundation overseeing the refunding of the money

that is owed to those victims' families of the Lockerbie disaster. We

met at the largest university in Libya, Al Fateh University, which has

75,000 students. We met with the leaders of the Libyan-American

Friendship Society, which was started in 2000, where 400 people waited

for 3 hours for us to arrive in this large tent to welcome us openly

with American flags flying outside of the tent and inside of the tent,

with children dressed up in colorful costumes to sing for us, with

young people reciting poetry for us and speeches welcoming America back

to Libya.

Everyplace we went, Mr. Speaker, every person we met, every group we

talked to was hungry and starving for a new positive relationship with

America.

In fact, during our first day in downtown Tripoli, I asked the

delegation to break away with me to go on an unplanned event, to walk 3

or 4 blocks away from the hotel, and to go into the marketplace, the

old city, the shopping district, where hundreds of shops and local

stores are there for the Libyan citizens to buy their materials, their

clothing, their housewares, their pots and pans, and the things that

they need for their own lives. The delegation walked together, without

any preannouncement, without guards around us, without any advanced

alert, and we went through the marketplace. Every person we met in the

Libyan marketplace in downtown Tripoli was positive. They came up to

us, they shook our hands. A young 10-year-old, when the gentlewoman

from Michigan (Mrs. Miller) said, Hi, how are you, said back to her, I

am fine, how are you? And she said, You speak excellent English. He

said, I have been practicing in school.

We met shopkeepers, an elderly gentleman who was pounding the copper,

making pots, who looked up and said, We are glad to have you in our

country. We hope it is a new beginning. Everyone we met on the streets

of Tripoli, Mr. Speaker, were positive toward America. It overwhelmed

us. It was not what we expected, it was not what we were told to expect

by our own government back here in our country.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, Members sitting around the table at the

university with the President of the Al Fateh University and about 25

of his department heads; and remember, this is a 75,000 student

university, they have major programs in medicine, in law, in health

care, in science, in technology, in education, in environment and

agriculture. As he went around the room, each of these department

heads, all of whom spoke excellent English, give us their background

and what department they headed. It was unbelievable, Mr. Speaker. All

but two of them were educated here in America. They told us what

schools they attended: UCLA, Princeton, Colorado, Michigan, University

of Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Georgia, all the major schools of our

country.

And they told us of their longing to once again reestablish ties with

the American educational system and with the American people. In fact,

one of the professors at the University, professor of English, Dr. T.

T. Tarhuui, wrote a poem entitled ``Members of Congress,'' which I will

enter into the Record when I place our trip report in at the end so the

American people and our colleagues can read the poem he wrote for our

visit.

So the response by the people and the leaders of Libya was

unbelievably and overwhelmingly positive. In fact, we asked to see a

weapons of mass destruction site. Not only did they take us to their

nuclear complex but we had full access to their 10 megawatt research

reactor which they opened to look into and to understand what they were

doing with radio isotopes and discuss with them their nuclear program;

but before we went to that site, they had us sit down with the minister

who was in charge of the entire program to allow the IAEA and the U.S.

and Great Britain to remove the weapons of mass destruction from that

nuclear site and from Libya. In fact, much of that removal took place

the same week that we were in Libya on a separate military aircraft.

But perhaps the most interesting meeting in Libya was with Colonel

Qadafi. We did not know what to expect. We were taken to his residence

that we had bombed in 1986. We saw the devastation still evident. We

saw the lessons and the stories about his daughter who was killed. And

we were then brought to another part of the complex where there was a

large outdoor tent. We were led in and sat down on the sofas arranged

in a semi-circle manner and awaited the arrival of Colonel Qadafi.

About 5 minutes later, he came into the tent in his glowing purple

robed outfit with his hat on, shook our hands, smiled and sat down. And

for 2 hours we had a discussion among the group. And then I had a

private session with him for 30 minutes.

In the trip report, Mr. Speaker, are the very quotes that Colonel

Qadafi made to our group as transcribed by both our staff director,

Doug Roach, and our military escort. We had two separate note takers in

that meeting.

It was a very solemn meeting with Qadafi. For the first 25 or 30

minutes he talked to us in a very low tone, a very deliberate tone. And

he said, You know, I am so happy that you are here, he said, but my

question is why has it taken over 30 years for someone from your

country to sit down with me and talk to me? I could understand if you

met with me and you had problems because I had done something wrong,

some terrible act, but if you would have met with me and talked with me

and then felt that I was lying, you would have been justified in

bombing me. But you did not talk to me for over 30 years.

He said, You do not understand the Libyan people. We understand

America. We studied all about it. And I would ask you to help me in my

effort to reestablish that relationship with your country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we made no apologies to Colonel Qadafi. We let him

and his leaders know that the past actions of his government and some

of his people were outrageous and will never be forgiven nor forgotten.

But we also said it is time to move into a new direction.

We praised him personally for the public statements that he has made

about his willingness to remove his weapons of mass destruction and

about his willingness to turn over a new page in a relationship with

the West.

He talked about his country's coming into the arms control regimes

that for decades they have not been a part of. And for that we thanked

him. And we said to Colonel Qadafi, Your words are important and we

praise them, but words will not carry the day. You must show us with

your actions that you truly are serious with removing the weapons of

mass destruction, about changing the ways of the past, about working

with us on the problem of terrorism, about rooting out those cells that

exist in your country, and about laying down a new foundation for the

future.

We told him that we would judge Libya and their colonel's comments

based on substance as opposed to words and dialogue. But we also told

him that if that process continued that we were sure that one day a

normalization of relations would occur. And when that day came, we in

the Congress, Democrats and Republicans, were prepared to help our

President establish a new relationship with the people and the

institutions of Libya.

Our meetings with Qadafi were productive, were candid, and were

designed to convey a positive message of support for the leadership of

our President in stating that Libya has become a model of moving in the

right direction away from terrorism.

One of the things that Colonel Qadafi said to us was that he was

taking tremendous heat from the other Arab leaders in the region who

were making fun of him, who were criticizing him and calling him

because of his decision to renounce weapons of mass destruction. And

his concern was that America not abandon him if, in fact, he continues

to do the kinds of things that have happened over the past several

weeks with both the IAEA, Great Britain, and the United States.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think our trip to Libya was extremely positive. We

were not there to become a patsy for anyone. We were not there to try

to brush over what has happened in the past. We were there to do what I

said earlier is my top job as the vice chairman of the Committee on

Armed Services, to avoid another war, to find a way not to appease

anyone, but to continue on the path that our President has laid down,

to turn a former terrorist nation, a nation that has been involved in

state-sponsored activity in a new direction to becoming friends with

the U.S.

The second part of our trip moved us to Iraq. We had amazing meetings

with the troops. We had time with Ambassador Bremer, with General

Sanchez. We asked them to give us updates on the troops' activities, on

the stability inside of that country.

We had a meeting with Dr. Pachachi, who is the leader of the

governing council. We had several of his colleagues there with us as we

talked about the plan to hand Iraq over to his people. And he thanked

us for that support. We assured him that America was there for the long

haul; and that even though the political rhetoric of this election year

will cause Democrats and Republicans to criticize each other, that we

were not going to as Americans abandon what we had started in Iraq.

We then went out with the troops, Mr. Speaker. I mentioned we talked

at length with the Iraq survey team. I will not review that because I

did it at the beginning of my Special Order. But we went out and had

other meetings as well in Iraq. In fact, we traveled up to Tikrit. We

went in a C-130, and we saw the terrible trauma that our C-130 pilots

are under as they have to evasively fly into airports to do

unbelievable maneuvers so they can avoid the surface-to-air missiles

that still exist in Iraq.

On the ground up in the Tikrit area, we were able to take Blackhawk

helicopters out into the troop areas to meet with troops, to go to the

spider hole where Saddam had been holed up, to visit with our Special

Forces. In fact, we were able to be a part of a ceremony as one of our

young Special Forces, Mr. Reyes, Sergeant Reyes, reenlisted. We became

a part of that ceremony to honor him for his commitment to our country.

We had a tremendous interaction with the general in charge of the 4th

Infantry Division, General Odierno, who gave us a personal update as to

the encounters that were taking place on a daily basis. In fact, I had

a very moving experience there with General Odierno because one of my

constituents, a 24-year-old young man who I had nominated to West

Point, was killed in an attack back in the latter part of 2003.

As General Odierno was describing to us some of the attacks on his

troops, he talked about a young 24-year-old that he had come to know,

an outstanding leader whose convoy was attacked, whose troops came

under heavy fire, who himself was hit, and in spite of his own

injuries, continued to protect and save the lives of at least one and

possibly two other soldiers before his life was snuffed out.

As the general talked, and as I described to him the 24-year-old that

I had nominated to West Point, the general asked me his name. And I

said Bernstein. He said Congressman, that is who I was talking about.

He went to school with my son at West Point. I happen to have a 3-page

letter with me from Lieutenant Bernstein's parents thanking me for the

praise we had acknowledged for him to his family, including comments

from those who knew the lieutenant, who had been touched by him during

his brief life. I gave a copy of that letter to the general. He was

very moved and presented me with the unit coin which I will present to

the Bernstein family in remembrance of their son, a brave American

hero.

Our visit with the troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan, Uzbekistan

was to assess what they needed. We came back with the idea that they

need more linguistic support, they need more UAVs, and we need better

benefits and support for our Guard and Reservists who are serving so

well. And that message was conveyed throughout the trip.

In leaving Iraq, we went to Islamabad and then flew into Afghanistan

into the capital city of Kabul where we met with King Zahir Shah to

assess his continuing role as the leader of that country, someone who

helped us get the Afghanis to convene Aloya Jirga to bring together the

leaders to establish a constitutional government.

In following the meeting with King Zahir Shah, we met with the leader

of the government of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai. He talked to the

success only made possible by the leadership of the

United States. In between we met with more of our troops.

Then we flew from Kabul up to our K2 base in Uzbekistan, a former

Soviet military site where we spent a day and a half with the troops.

Each member of our delegation walked through the wards. We went to the

bedsides of those soldiers, some who had shrapnel wounds, some who had

been shot in the leg, some who had piercings of the eyes, some who had

skin diseases. And we told them that they were our heroes.

We met with those that were on the way out in transition, that were

coming back to the States. In fact, we offered seats to 12 of those

young soldiers who came back with us to America and then were taken to

the Army medical facility here in Washington, D.C. for further

treatment and eventual transport back to their districts.

We had two town meetings in the military base in K2. As we stayed

overnight, we had dinner one night and breakfast the next morning with

the troops. And during the evening and the morning, we had town

meetings to allow the troops to tell us what was on their minds. They

told us the good things and bad things; but without any question, Mr.

Speaker, the morale of our troops in every visit we made was

overwhelmingly positive. They knew why they were there. They were

positive for being there. And they were happy that we came.

We delivered 10,000 Valentine's cards, made by schoolchildren all

over America. We delivered 25 cases of Tasty Cakes so the troops could

get a fresh taste of America and the treats that come from my hometown

city of Philadelphia. We even brought over shirts from the Philadelphia

Eagles. Unfortunately, not many wanted them because the Eagles had lost

a terribly embarrassing game before in the playoffs, but we gave them

out anyway.

Mr. Speaker, our trip was an overwhelming success. I am proud of

those Members of Congress that went on this journey to try to improve

relations with these nations, with these emerging democracies, and the

conversion of this former arch enemy of ours.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to the gentleman from Indiana

(Mr. Souder) for whatever time he would like to consume, one of the

stars on this trip. He was the only member of the delegation not on the

Committee on Armed Services, the other five were; but he is a strong

supporter of our military and, more importantly, he is the chairman of

the oversight committee that oversees all of our anti-narcotics and

abuse efforts worldwide. He has been a leader in helping the President

and the administration deal with the problems of narcoterrorism, and he

and his staff were there to specifically focus on that issue, and he

did it extremely well at every stop. But it was a pleasure to have him

with us. He has traveled in the past with me to Russia. And I was proud

to have him as a colleague on this trip.

Mr. Speaker, I want to add a comment

about the role of this body and members of foreign policy.

There are some who say that Members of Congress should not travel

overseas or travel to countries that we are having problems with.

I will say that is absolutely, totally wrong. There are some within

the State Department who take offense to the fact that Members of

Congress will

travel to countries like this. Let me say to my colleagues in this

body, many of you will be here for 10 years or 20 years. If you focus

on one country or a group of countries, you will have far more

opportunities to specialize in that country than a State Department

official who spends 3 years in one post and moves on someplace else.

There is a very real and substantive role for Members of Congress to

play, and we must play it. This is not a case where the executive

branch controls everything and we are just subservient to them. We are

an equal part of the Federal Government, and we have the responsibility

because we appropriate the dollars, we levy the taxes, and we oversee

the way the money is spent, to travel to these countries, to open

doors, to look for new ways to establish relationships, and to support

the administration, which we did on this trip as we have on every major

trip. But there is a role for the Congress to play.

I am convinced that Members of Congress can play an extremely

constructive role because we do not have to act as diplomats. We do not

have to watch how we sit, how we sip our tea, what words did we use,

because we are not representing the President. We are not representing

the Secretary of State. We are representing ourselves. The members of

Congress on this CODEL, as it has been on every CODEL that I have been

a part of, did a fantastic job on behalf of America.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to at this point in time place the trip

report in the Record, filed as a part of our process as we do for every

trip that gives the American people and our colleagues a complete,

factual understanding of what we did, where we went and how we

represented our country.

I am proud of this delegation, Democrats and Republicans alike,

opening new doors to help in the security of not just America but of

all those countries that want peace around the world.