Mr. Speaker, as we begin to talk about our national

security and our troops and the surge and the success of that and why

our troops choose to defend this great Nation, I want to stop and just

join Mr. Gingrey in congratulating his mother on her 90th birthday.

Certainly, Helen Cecelia Gingrey sounds like the type of woman that

truly takes a leadership role, first of all, in her family and role

models that leadership and how to carry that out in how to encourage

children to dream big dreams and have great adventures in their life

and to desire that.

That is something you learn at a mother's knee. That is something you

see role modeled by parents, and Mr. Speaker, that is something that we

need to keep in mind as we are here on the floor of the House in this

body, as we make decisions about how our Nation moves forward in this

21st century.

We need to remember that there are future generations that are

relying on us to be certain that this Nation stays secure. There are

future generations that are looking to us that go every single day and

say, what will my tomorrow be like? Is my community going to be secure?

What is America going to look like when I am 20, when I'm 30, when I

get ready to retire?

We would do well to be mindful of that every single day as we make

decisions that affect America's families and realize, yes, indeed,

those families are our greatest treasure. Those precious minds of those

precious children are indeed what we are to be protecting and be

certain that they have the ability to dream those big dreams.

So to Dr. Gingrey's mom, Helen Gingrey, happy birthday. We all

congratulate you, and we are so pleased that we live in a free Nation

and we can stand on the floor of this House and celebrate those

birthdays and join your son in wishing you happy birthday and many,

many more.

Mr. Speaker, I recently did return from a trip to Afghanistan and

Iraq to visit with our troops. And tonight I want to spend some time

talking about what has been going on in Iraq and the success that we

have seen there, the success that our troops have brought to bear on

Iraq and on the environment that is there.

Just about 3 weeks ago, we had the 1-year anniversary of the surge,

and everyone had a lot to say about that surge and a lot to say about

how successful they thought it would or would not be. I think, Mr.

Speaker, it's very easy for us to be Monday morning quarterbacks or

armchair quarterbacks and to always have our opinion of how we think

these things are going to work out.

The 101st is in my district in Tennessee. We also have the National

Guardsmen from our State that have been deployed, Reservists who have

been deployed, and we would always say we need to be listening to the

troops that are in the field and the commanders that are there on the

ground.

We saw a change about a year ago. The change was in the form of the

surge. The implementation of that surge was carried out by General

David Petraeus. He was joined by Ambassador Crocker as they moved

forward with the preparations and the implementation of that surge, and

we have seen results.

Over the December and January period of time, we had the opportunity

to visit, and I am pleased to be joined tonight by my colleague from

Texas (Mr. Burgess) who has been on the ground in Iraq several times, I

think six times he has been to visit our troops in Iraq. And he wanted

to join me tonight for a few minutes and talk about what he saw and

give a firsthand account of what he saw.

I'm so pleased that he has chosen to join us because one of the

things our troops mentioned to us on our trip was, We are fighting

every day. We are in a war. And we are winning significant battles

every single day. And we want the American people to know we are

fighting. We are giving it our all, and yes, indeed, we are winning

every day.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for us to realize that a lot

of times, success comes in odd ways. Progress comes in unexpected ways.

And it is not just on a trajectory where every day is better and better

and better. We take a few steps forward, we take a few steps back. We

take a few more steps forward, we take a little step back. But when you

add it up, you are trending the right direction.

That is certainly what we have seen in the success of the surge. We

have seen every major news outlet declare it a success. The American

people know that it is a success. And our troops are to be commended

for that success. Certainly, the President was right in making that

commendation last night.

As I said a moment ago, Dr. Burgess from Texas who's been to Iraq six

times wants to join us and share his impressions of what he saw on the

ground in Iraq, and I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

I would like to put that photo back up, if you do not

mind.

Now, I think it is significant that you're talking about Ramadi,

which is in al Anbar Province. And you're talking about a photo that

was made during the summer, July 14, 2007, which is the photo stamp

date that is there on the photo. And if I am picking all of this up, it

looks like tools and implements that are hanging in the ceiling of the

shop, and plastic buckets, rubber buckets, and probably some plastic

hampers that are there. And when I was in Iraq, I noticed that there

was lots of produce that was also being sold in some of the shops.

But one of the things that is of interest to me is the photo that

you're showing indicates to us that we do have import and export that

is taking place, and we do have commerce that is taking place. And so,

as you were on that street in Ramadi, how many shops did you see; do

you remember a number? How many were lining the street? And how far did

you drive from the base into town to begin to see this type of commerce

and the happy kids that are obviously learning how to do a little bit

of retail merchant work there?

I yield back to the gentleman.

If the gentleman will yield, a dozen shops in any of

our towns in our districts is a pretty good number of shops. So, we've

got a lot of commerce that is beginning to take place there. And I

yield back.

I thank the gentleman for yielding back the time. And

I am so pleased to see these pictures. And I appreciate so much his

participation in this, and the conversation about the establishment of

commerce and how he witnessed this firsthand with shops that were open.

As he said, one little side street where they went there were about 12

shops that were on that. And indeed, these are more like stalls that we

would have at one of our swap meets or flea markets. But as you can

see, they're full of kids that are happy, that are playing, that are

enjoying being around the normalcy of a life. They are full of commerce

and goods, items that are coming in for sale. We even saw soft drinks,

Coca-Cola. In Afghanistan, we saw cell phones that were being sold. So,

in this region of the world, the commerce that is there on the ground.

And in talking about Iraq, the gentleman mentioned the local

stability. And indeed, that was something we had the opportunity to

witness, also, and we're pleased to see that. We had a visit to Urbil

in Kurdistan, had the opportunity to go to the home of the Prime

Minister of Kurdistan. We drove to that home. Mr. Speaker, I want to be

certain that everyone realizes what I just said. We drove to the home

of the Prime Minister of Kurdistan for lunch and joined him where he

thanked us profusely for all that the U.S. Armed Forces have done for

that region, not only in the past few years, but for the decade prior.

While we were in Iraq, we had the opportunity to go to the home of

Deputy Prime Minister Barzani, to his home in the Green Zone to meet

with him. And I will tell you, we visited with him about how hopeful we

had experienced the mood of the people. There is a sense of hope that

things are getting better, that there is a return to normalcy in their

everyday life, and how encouraging to us it was to witness this

hopefulness.

His comment to us was, we know that sometimes people get frustrated

with us, but do not give up this mission. Do not give up on this

mission because things are trending the right direction. Indeed, Mr.

Speaker, it's all important components in winning, in having Iraq be a

nation that can function with some predictability, stability and self-

governance.

It is also important because, as we look at defeating terrorists who

want to defeat us, it is important that we win the war of ideas. And

the photos that Dr. Burgess shared with us, the young men in those

photos, we have to win the war of ideas with them to reach them, to

make certain that over the next decade, as they begin an adult life,

that they make a choice to live in freedom rather than choosing a life

under a dictator.

Indeed, our job is also to make certain that our troops have what

they need to do their job. And that is a responsibility of this House,

as the President said last night. And certainly, as we are in the midst

of a swing, a dramatic swing, if you will, in the momentum in Iraq,

especially on the security situation, it is imperative that we pay

close attention to meeting the needs of those troops.

Now, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you, I do not think it

is helpful to this situation that we debated over 30 different

resolutions about Iraq and timelines and withdrawals and trying to

micromanage what is taking place on the ground because there has been a

swing and a shift. We have transitioned from 2.5 years of increases in

violence with more than 24 weeks of a steady decline.

Now, Dr. Burgess mentioned, when we go to Iraq, and I want to clarify

one thing here before I move on, this week I had the opportunity to

visit with the Tennessee Marine Family Association, and what a

wonderful, wonderful group of moms and dads and brothers and sisters

and marines who have retired from active duty. And I enjoyed my time

with them tremendously. And one of them said, you know, tell me, when

you go to Iraq, why do you go? And are you taking the troops' time away

from work in the field? And I said no, we go because we are asked to

go, especially those of us that have posts. As I've said, Fort

Campbell, the 101st is in my district, and they invite us and ask us to

come and see how they are carrying out their mission and experience

that firsthand with them.

But as Dr. Burgess said, when we make those trips, we have the power

points and we have the briefings from the commanders on the ground and

we have the opportunity while we are there to hold a town hall meeting,

if you will, with our troops that are deployed and are carrying out

this mission. So I have put some of that endless power point onto some

charts that I would like to share with those who are watching us this

evening.

The first chart that I'm going to show you is one that comes from our

commanders there in Iraq, and it shows their assessment of al Qaeda

Iraq. And many times people will see AQI, that is, the abbreviation for

al Qaeda Iraq, and where they were when the surge began last year. And

you can see the dark red areas. It shows where they were operating, and

the pink areas show what were their transit routes. And you can see how

in the city of Baghdad where they were operating, and then as you look

at the country you can see where they were transiting in and out of the

country and then where they were holding their primary areas of

operation. Again, the pink shading is their transit areas, and the red

is where they were operational and where they were working. And the

inset is Baghdad and what we saw in Baghdad and how that looked before

the surge began.

Now I want to move to the second chart and show you what this looks

like today. This is what Iraq looks like today. And, again, this is not

my chart. This is a chart from our commanders on the ground in Iraq.

This is their assessment.

So, Mr. Speaker, to the American people that are watching this

tonight, I will simply say this is the chart that is your commanders'

assessment of where al Qaeda is as of December 2007. And, of course, al

Qaeda is still a threat. Of course, they are still there. But as you

can see, by looking at the pink areas and the red areas, this has been

diminished. They have been pushed out of the urban centers, look at the

inset, with Baghdad. You can see where they have been squeezed down and

where they have been moved to and how much smaller their area of

operation is and how much smaller their transit area is. They know that

the Iraqi people, the Iraqi forces, and the U.S. Armed Forces and our

coalition forces mean business on this.

Look at the map of the entire country. When you can see their egress,

ingress with the surrounding countries, and then see the pockets where

al Qaeda Iraq is still operational. So they have been pushed out of

many of the urban areas, and they have been moved over into some of the

isolated rural areas.

I want to touch base too on our troops' contribution to this because

it has been significant. Our U.S. Armed Forces and the 30,000 that went

in for the surge made a marked difference. And I think there is, of

course, the physical strength that our troops brought to this, the

firepower, if you will, and the training and the strength and the

determination. There are no better forces on the face of the Earth than

the U.S. military. And we also have to recognize the Iraqis and the

force that they brought to bear on this.

When we talk about the surge, sometimes many of us think only in

terms of the 30,000 of our troops that have led the way in this fight.

What we have to realize also is that we have 110,000 Iraqi troops that

have lent their power to this effort, 110,000. They were joined in this

effort by 70,000 local citizens.

Dr. Burgess mentioned earlier the local stability, and there is a

reason for that. You had 70,000 Iraqi citizens that basically banded

together in what we would call a ``neighborhood watch,'' and they

decided to take things into their own hands and to take responsibility.

And in many of these areas in the surge the Iraqi troops would lead.

They were coached. They were trained. They were supported in so many

ways by our U.S. military and by our coalition forces. And the local

Iraqi citizen groups would work with those military forces, those

combined forces. So together you had 180,000 Iraqis working with our

30,000 U.S. troops that have made this surge successful and have

changed that map so that it looks today like it does, with al Qaeda

being moved into some isolated areas and with more of the country being

able to function with a sense of normalcy.

Now, we've already talked a little bit about al Anbar province and

the success that was there because that is where al Qaeda Iraq had

planted its flag. It was the capital of the caliphate, and that is

where they were going to put down roots, if you will. What we saw

happen in al Anbar province during the surge, I think, is just nothing

short of remarkable, and the photos that you've just seen from the

streets of Ramadi and the commerce that was taking place and the

difference that the surge has made there. Basically, the citizens of

Ramadi and al Anbar province said we are sick and tired of this. We do

not want al Qaeda Iraq to be running the show in our town. So they

joined with the Iraqi troops and the U.S. troops, and they literally

threw al Qaeda out.

So many of the experts tell us that this is the first place that the

Arab people have stood up to their own and have rejected, openly

rejected, al Qaeda and have defeated al Qaeda. And I think that that is

significant. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe and I certainly am hopeful in

believing that we are going to see other areas follow the lead that al

Anbar has set.

Now, we have seen some other effects of that team effort over the

past year, and I want to move on to a couple of other charts. Now, this

is the overall attack trends, Iraq attack trends; and it shows you what

has happened, if you look from December 2006, and where your attacks

were in December 2006, with over 5,000, and then you go up into April

and May where they reach their height, and then you can see where they

have dropped down, less than half, and the reduction that is there. It

is actually down about 60 percent by the time you get to December 2007.

That is the difference that the surge has made. From December 2006,

where you're up above 5,000 attacks and then coming down where you have

seen that number drop by about 60 percent. That's the difference that

the surge has made in the overall attacks.

Well, let's look at the IED explosions. This is something that our

constituents always ask us about because they hear so much about the

explosive devices and the way these IEDs and these IED systems are

developed and set up and the way those explosions are carried out.

You can see, if you go in here and you look at December 2006, where

they are. They move up in June to a high of about 1,700, and then take

a look over here, about 700 in December. And there you go from

beginning to the end of surge, the year of the surge, and what you have

seen. It is almost as if you have al Qaeda jumping in here and saying

we're not going to let them get the best of us. They give it a shot,

and then in June look how every single month you're dropping. And

that's the difference that a year of the surge has made.

Let's move on to another figure on this chart, the killed-in-action

figure. And as we look at this chart and we see the dramatic drop that

is here, Mr. Speaker, we feel so deeply for the families that have

experienced a loss, and at Fort Campbell we have seen some losses

recently, and we just continue to hold those families close. And we are

grateful, so grateful, to them for their service, for their sacrifice,

and we grieve with them in those losses. And we know that over the

course of the year we have seen a dramatic decrease in those losses.

Now, chart number six, the Iraqi civilian deaths attributed to

violence, these have dropped significantly. And you can see in December

2006, where we were at about 3,000 and then where we are way down, well

under 1,000 by the time we get to December 2007. So this shows us how

security is improving. Ethnosectarian violence has dropped by about 85

percent. All of these are the right type trend. And it shows how things

are moving a little bit at a time, moving in the right direction.

We know there are no guarantees. This is tough. Our military men and

women know that they are fighting and winning every day. But, Mr.

Speaker, I will tell you they do know that they are seeing some

successes, that security is improving, and that they are seeing some

success with economic issues. And I want to give you just a couple of

examples of these.

I had made a comment as we were leaving Baghdad the other night, and

it was in the evening; so you could see the lights in Baghdad. I had

been going in and out to visit our troops since 2003, and for the first

time it really looked like a city. You could see the lights on all over

the city and cars driving on the streets. You could see outdoor

restaurants. You could see colorful awnings. You could see fruit stands

and market areas. And it really was beginning to look like a city. And

I did a little checking to see what kind of success stories we could

find with the work that USAID and some of our organizations are

providing to the area to see that commerce stand up and that sense of

normalcy return. So let me tell you a quick little story, Mr. Speaker,

and I think this is great.

We love success stories. We love it when we have someone who by their

bootstraps pulls themselves up and realizes a wonderful dream of having

a business or building a company. We as Americans love that

entrepreneurial spirit. And I loved this story of Amhed who is in the

Mansour neighborhood in Baghdad, and he was able to get a $2,500

microgrant. Now, I know many of our constituents may have been reading

in the paper about some of the microgrants and the microbusinesses that

are going into Iraq and other countries also to help entrepreneurs

start these businesses.

Well, Amhed used his grant to buy chest freezer shelves and an awning

to open a store. And the store is now self-sufficient. It is supporting

him and his family. He now is a merchant with his store, his produce

store, on a corner there in the Mansour neighborhood in Baghdad. And it

came about because there was a grant that helped him to get that store

in place.

Now, this is important, Mr. Speaker, because you wouldn't go take out

a loan and you wouldn't be approved for that loan if there was not the

ability to put things in place and begin to see some success in that

neighborhood.

Well, we also have another one, a juice merchant, that used a USAID

microfinance grant and opened a juice factory in Baghdad. There's lots

of pomegranate juice and orange juice and the different juices they are

beginning to manufacture and bottle and sell. This juice factory in

Baghdad, with a microfinance grant from our USAID, has created 24 full-

time jobs in Baghdad. That one little grant. And that gentleman is now

making that juice. Of course, I said, well, I hope that Ahmed is one of

the customers of the juice factory and selling that juice in his store

on the corner, his produce store on the corner.

Now, I know that there are some who want to say that the security

improvements aren't meaningful because we are not seeing enough

political progress in Iraq. I will tell you that, and I think we all

agree, that that political progress has not moved forward as quickly as

we would like to. But we were reminded last week as we visited with

Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus that the Washington clock and

the Baghdad clock move at different speeds. You know, I guess that as

impatient as many times as we are, we do have to realize this is a

country that was under a dictator, a very brutal dictator for over

three decades.

We are beginning to see some very encouraging signs of political

progress, and I think this year is going to be a year when we see some

more of that. Just over a week ago, the Iraqi Parliament did pass what

was for them a very difficult law. They have taken a long time to look

at de-Ba'athification reform, and that was passed. It has been

difficult for them to address that central question of how the Iraqi

people are going to deal with their past and with the legacy of Saddam

Hussein.

The law has gone through their parliament, and it has passed. It was

passed with Shiite sponsorship, which is significant. We have also seen

some key Sunni political blocks return to parliament, to return to

their work to be a part of the process.

Those are very encouraging steps. They are steps in the right

direction. Certainly, the success of the surge has allowed the ability

for this to take place. We have also seen the Iraqi Government has

developed and is working on an ambitious budget. We are certainly

hoping that they are going to do the same thing as they work through

this current year. We have seen some encouraging signs of critical

power sharing arrangements within the Iraqi Government. Their Prime

Minister, Nouri Maliki, is apparently more willing to share power with

the three-person presidency council, which represents each of the major

sects in Iraq. So that is another sign that is very encouraging to us.

Anybody who is a serious and objective observer can say that the

surge has worked. They admit that. We know that we are going to face

more debate in the coming year over the length and nature and the size

of our mission in Iraq. I would encourage all of my colleagues to take

the success of the surge to heart and to be certain that they are not

trying to snatch a defeat from the jaws of victory, but that they are

being fair to our troops, that they are recognizing the success that

these troops have given us in the surge, and that they are taking time

to commend and thank the troops and the commanders that are on the

ground.

I think it's fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that we all, I know I

certainly appreciate those troops and their families, and I appreciate

having the opportunity to support them and to let them know how much I

appreciate having that opportunity to support them and also to honor

them and to honor their families. My hope is that as we go through 2008

and as we look at our legislative agenda, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the

work of this body will honor those men and women who honor us every

single day, who honor the legacy of freedom every single day by the way

that they choose to carry out their job and by the way they choose to

represent this great Nation.