Madam Speaker, I just returned on a codel from Baghdad,

among other places, with four other Members, a bipartisan trip. I am

proud to report that our troops are doing a marvelous job under the

circumstances in which they have been placed.

To ride in a C-130 with American soldiers going into combat, seeing

their faces and realizing that they were going into harm's way was

very, very emotional; to ride in a Humvee with soldiers who faced an

enemy that they didn't know who it was because friends and enemy look

alike; and to be in the streets of Baghdad.

I was buoyed by the enthusiasm of our troops but know they are going

to need help over the years with veterans benefits. We were in

Landstuhl, Germany hospital today with a soldier who lost his leg on

Friday. Continuing injuries will cause a continuing commitment from the

American people and a continuing commitment to make sure that Iran does

not exercise undue influence.

Prime Minister Maliki reasserted his desire to provide defense for

his own country with help from America with equipment and not to have

Iran interfere. I wasn't as extremely enthusiastic about what I saw in

the country of Iraq, which has been ravaged, or their government, which

needs much improvement.

But our troops are beyond reproach and they need our support.