Mr. Speaker, to the new prime minister of Iraq, Dr. Ayad

Allawi, let me say you are most welcome, sir. Dr. Allawi, in addition

to being selected as the new prime minister for the country of Iraq,

provided a very vociferous ``thank you'' to President Bush and the

United States of America for ridding his country of the scourge of

Saddam Hussein.

We have now seen two significant events this year, the standing up of

the new Iraqi constitution, a constitution that respects majority rule

but also respects the rights of the minority; a constitution that

contains a robust bill of rights and the protection and the involvement

of women in government. There is a clear goal understood by all who are

involved in that process, to see the Iraqi people free and in charge of

Iraq for the first time in generations.

America's task in Iraq is not only to defeat an enemy. It is to give

strength to a friend, a free, representative government that serves the

people and fights on their behalf. The sooner this goal is achieved,

the sooner our job will be done.

The Iraqi interim government takes power on 30 June. It will serve

for only 7 months until a new government is chosen through democratic

elections to be held as soon as possible, but no later than the end of

January, 2005.