Mr. Speaker, I want to yield myself 1 1/2 minutes to

respond to the first assertion just made by my colleague, to the effect

that we sent the troops in without what he called life-saving

equipment.

When we finished the Clinton administration, virtually no one in any

of the 10 Army divisions, which, incidentally, had been cut from 14

Army divisions when that administration went into power, none of the 10

divisions that were left, virtually none of them had any bulletproof

vests, any of this body armor that we talk about that our troops have

today.

When we went into the first operation, we had much more than the

Clinton administration had. At that point we had a number of the

inserts, of the so-called Small Arms Protective Inserts. We had the

outer tactical vests that incorporate those inserts with all of our

Marines, with all of the infantry units going in with the U.S. Army.

And very quickly after that, we developed a plan in which we fielded

body armor for not only the people on the front lines, the infantry,

the artillery, the armor, but also everybody that is in theater.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely outrageous to tell the American people

that the Americans were dangerously unequipped when we went into Iraq.

We went in with better equipment than we have ever had in any wars that

this country has ever fought. And today, we have fielded over 40,000

pieces of new equipment that we didn't have 4 years ago that makes our

troops yet more efficient.

I would like to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr.

Linder).

Mr. Speaker, let me just take 2 minutes to respond to my

colleague who has just made a number of points.

First, there are a number of live Democrats that I like to refer to.

When somebody asks me whether or not Saddam Hussein was indeed a

dangerous terrorist in and of himself, I like to take the words of all

of the Democrat leadership of this country in the 1990s, when, in their

words, there was no Bush administration to trick them, who made that

point very, very forcefully.

Secondly, the invasion of Iraq and the taking of Baghdad in record

time with very low casualties has been described by most military

leaders as being a remarkably efficient and effective operation. In

fact, while we had people saying that our troops would be bogged down,

the same talk shows would be interrupted with a news flash that Tommy

Franks had taken yet another stronghold of Saddam Hussein.

We took Baghdad with very low casualties, very, very quickly, in a

very effective and efficient military operation.

Lastly, I don't think that the gentleman can say that there have been

no ripples, no ripples whatsoever in the Middle East with respect to

freedom and democracy and people wanting to be free as a result of the

elections in Iraq. There clearly was action in Libya where they moved

lots of parts of their nuclear weapons program which are now residing

in the United States, I think as a result of American actions there.

Clearly actions toward freedom, toward ejecting the Syrians from

Lebanon and moving toward multiparty elections in Egypt. All imperfect

to be sure but nonetheless reactions from our operation in Iraq.

Lastly, I would just say to my colleague let me just say to my

colleague, there are no smooth roads. The smooth roads not taken, that

have been held out by the armchair critics, like we should have kept

Saddam Hussein's army in place, that was an army with 11,000 Sunni

generals. What are you going to do with an army with 11,000 Sunni

generals? Certainly not establish stability in a country in which you

have a Shiite majority.

The idea that we needed to have 300,000 Americans in Iraq and yet at

the same time put an Iraqi face, as a number of the critics have said,

on the military apparatus.

So I think a number of the gentleman's points have been strongly

disproven by the American operation in Iraq. We are in the second

period right now of a three-phase operation: stand up a free

government; stand up a military capable of protecting that free

government; lastly, the Americans leave. Let's give the second phase a

chance to work.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from

South Carolina (Mr. Wilson).

Mr. Speaker, I want to yield myself 15 seconds to make a

response to that last point.

My last point wasn't that Lebanon is California or New York or

Massachusetts. My last point was that the free elections in Iraq

inspired the Lebanese to work to eject the Syrian influence, which I

think the gentleman would agree was not a good influence in Lebanon. It

inspired people to want to be free.

I thank my friend for yielding.

This is, indeed, a sad time in our country. Five years ago we came to

this floor united. We joined in sending our troops off in this war

against terror.

You know, Madam Speaker, for the first number of strikes that were

delivered by Muslim extremists in this war, the terrorists chose the

battlefields. They chose a battlefield as a Marine barracks in Beirut.

And Mr. Skelton and I were there, he shortly after the explosion that

killed our Marines, I shortly before that explosion. They chose the

Khobar Towers, they chose the embassies in Africa, they chose the USS

Cole, and then they chose New

York, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania. We chose the next two

battlefields, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Our Democrat colleagues say that Iraq was the wrong battlefield, and

I have heard resonating through the floor over the last 4 days

statements that they were tricked, hornswoggled, fooled about Saddam

Hussein.

From my side of the argument as to whether or not Saddam Hussein was

a dangerous terrorist, I will simply offer all the statements by every

Democrat leader in America during the 1990s, when there was no Bush

administration to, in the words of my Democrat colleagues, ``trick

them.'' I will offer their statements about Saddam Hussein.

Madam Speaker, we have expanded in the last 60 years. We have been in

the business of expanding freedom. We understood after World War II

that if we didn't change the world, the world would change us. And that

lesson was relearned after 9/11.

No one would argue that it is not in our interest to have a Japan on

the other side of the Pacific, where we stood up a free government,

where we have a free nation, or that it is not in our interest to have

a free El Salvador in our own hemisphere, or that it is not in our

interest to have those dozens of nations that were behind the Berlin

Wall that are now free and working for freedom. Many of them are

partners in Iraq. We understand that.

And now we are trying to expand freedom in a different part of the

world, a very dangerous part of the world. And we are undertaking the

same three-point strategy that we have had for 60 years: Number one,

you stand up a free government; number two, you stand up a military

capable of protecting that free government; and, number three, the

Americans leave.

And we can build on this Baghdad plan, which is right now in the

execution phase, this plan of having two or three Iraqi battalions out

front, with an American backup battalion to mentor them, and we can

rotate every one of the 129 Iraqi battalions through this type of a

combat rotation, stand them up, give them battlefield experience, and

then the Americans can leave.

Now, Madam Speaker, I have heard it said throughout this debate that

there was somehow a smooth road not taken. And let me just say, that is

not true. There are no smooth roads in the Middle East. There are no

smooth roads to standing up new governments, especially in communities

and states where people have been trained to live under dictatorships.

And for those who say if we had just kept Saddam Hussein's army in

place, with it is 11,000 Sunni generals, everything would have been

fine and we would have had a peaceful situation in Iraq right now, that

is nonsense. And for those who said if we had had 200,000 or 300,000

troops, the Shiites and Sunnis would have forgotten their ancient

rivalries, that is also nonsense.

What are the facts, the reality, our Democrat friends say we have to

be realists here, is this is a tough, difficult road. We are on the

second stage right now. Most importantly, Madam Speaker, our troops are

in the field already on this plan that is now being retroactively

disavowed by the Democratic leadership.

You know, it was in June, I think it was 2130 hours, June 6, 1944,

when the first elements of the first aircraft of the Pathfinder

companies went out in front of the 82nd Airborne over Normandy, and

they shortly were followed by hundreds of airplanes with American

paratroopers. The 82nd Airborne going into Normandy had the full

support and prayers of everybody in the United States Congress.

Today, you have got an 82nd Airborne Second Brigade now operating

under this plan in Baghdad already there in Baghdad. Now, is this going

to be the day, I would ask my colleagues, when some trooper from the

82nd Airborne writes on the concrete wall next to his position in

Baghdad, ``This is where I stood when the United States House of

Representatives led by the Democrat leadership rejected my mission''? I

hope that doesn't happen, Madam Speaker.

Vote ``no'' on this resolution.