Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I

may consume.

You know, it is an honor to be here today joined by Members of

Congress who have served this Nation nobly both in the Armed Forces and

today as statesmen and -women in the United States House of

Representatives.

You know, there are lots of ways people can serve this country.

Dedicating time to the Armed Forces, the greatest military in the

world, can be some of the most fulfilling time in one's life. I know,

because I spent 29 years in the United States Air Force; got called up

from my ROTC class at SMU and flew 62 combat missions in Korea in a

plane I named after my wife, ``Shirley's Texas Tornado.''

In 1965, I left for my first tour in Vietnam, working for General

Westmoreland in the headquarters. In 1966 I returned again. And while

flying my 25th mission, I was shot down, landed in the middle of a

division of North Vietnamese soldiers.

What followed for the next 2,494 days can only be described as hell

on Earth, or as my friend and fellow POW, Jeremiah Denton did, blinked

the letters of one word in Morse Code into a movie camera as a

desperate plea for help. The letters made up the word ``torture.'' Of

my nearly 7 years in captivity, I spent more than half of that time in

solitary confinement.

As you can imagine, the North Vietnamese would say and do anything to

break our will. The physical torture is not fit for describing as some

of it is too graphic and too gory. There were many times that I would

pray to God that I would pass out and slip into unconsciousness just to

escape the pain if I couldn't escape the beatings.

Yet, what also scarred me for life was the emotional torture that the

North Vietnamese broadcast to taunt us and break our wills. They

constantly blared anti-American messages from back home over the loud

speakers. The enemy knows that any anti-American murmur can be used as

a weapon. And the same holds true today.

The enemy wants our men and women in uniform to think that their

Congress doesn't care about them, that they are going to cut the

funding and abandon them and their mission. They want Congress to cave

to the wishes of those who advocate a cut-and-run attitude. And we

should not allow that to happen.

We must learn from our mistakes. We cannot leave a job undone like we

left in Korea, like we left in Vietnam, like we left in Somalia.

Osama bin Laden said that ``in Somalia, the United States pulled out,

trailing disappointment, defeat, and failure behind it.''

And we didn't blink an eye when the radicals bombed the Khobar Towers

in Saudi Arabia killing 20 and injuring 372; or after the Kenya embassy

bombings that killed 213 people and injured 5,000; or that same day at

the Tanzania embassy bombing killing 11 people and injuring 68. On

October 12, 2000 the USS Cole bombing killed 17 and injured 39. And we

all know how they tried to bring down the World Trade Towers and didn't

stop until they completed the job September 11.

All of these tragedies of terrorism happened without a United States

response.

We can't waver in our fight for freedom. We cannot abandon the

bedrock of democracy; they are the brave and selfless men and women of

our United States Armed Forces. We will stand up with them. We must

stand up with them. And I will stand up with them in Congress, because

they stand up for our freedom every minute of every day. They are the

reason we call America the land of the free and the home of the brave.

And I salute them.

Now, today I have the distinct privilege of managing time during this

debate. Each person joining me is a shining example of duty, honor,

country. And I know folks across America will learn a lot from hearing

about their stories and hearing why they know firsthand freedom is not

free.

Madam Speaker, in closing, we have heard a

lot of excellent presentation points today. I might just clarify the

fact that the study group did recommend a surge in one part, and the

President has eliminated the rules of engagement that we had laid on

our troops over there, so we have a way to make this thing really

happen.

I really want to know, if the Democrats insist they are supporting

our troops, why they would not let me introduce my measure that

mandates that Congress would support and fully fund the men and women

in uniform.

I am positive that Democrats will attempt to cut funding as soon as

the spending bills come up this spring, and maybe earlier, because

there was a press conference earlier today that indicated exactly that.

I fear what that means for our troops on the ground, for their

morale. The reality is that President Bush realized he needed to change

the course in Iraq, and that is why he worked with folks on the ground

in Iraq to hear fresh ideas and came up with a new plan.

The President wants change and that is why he changed the rules of

engagement, enabling our guys to shoot at any suspected terrorists. The

President wants change. That is why he removed political protections of

all insurgents, so all of the bad guys could be brought to justice

regardless of who they knew or who they worked for.

These ideas are huge breakthroughs and real solutions. These ideas

represent fresh starts and new plans. What is the Democratic plan to

move forward and win? They do not have one. Thirty-six hours of

political grandstanding, nonbinding resolutions and petty posturing,

they are not proposing solutions. They are not even encouraging new

ideas. In fact, they stop them like when they squashed my amendment.

Many hope that the troop surge is the beginning of the end. We should

all want that if it gets the job done. Yet the Democrats just say no.

You know, the time will come when you can put the money behind these

nonbinding resolutions. You better believe we will be watching and

calling for those funding cuts loud and clear. America needs to know,

cutting funds for our troops in harm's way is not a remedy. It is a

ruse.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and yield the

balance of my time to the next moderator, Mr. Saxton.