Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding, and I

just wanted to address a point that my friend from Massachusetts just

made.

He said that we always need to have up-armored Humvees in any war

that we enter into. We had at the end of the Clinton administration

about 112, as I recall, up-armored Humvees, only for VIPs and for

diplomats. We have today 15,000 up-armored 114s. This is the first war

in our history since the beginning of this country in which we have had

up-armored tactical vehicles.

With respect to the SAPI vests, that is, the bulletproof vests and

body armor that our troops wear, we had at the end of the Clinton

administration this many, zero pieces of body armor for our troops. We

have today over 400,000 sets. That is enough sets for two sets for

everybody who is in theater, and everybody has them.

I have said for the last several years if there is anybody who has a

son or daughter who does not have body armor who is in theater, call me

personally at my office. In the last 2 years, I have received zero

calls.

So we have, we feel, the new equipment, not just up-armored Humvees

but body armor, which incidentally is very heavy and, to some degree,

does result in some degradation of mobility, but we have put in

hundreds of new systems, weapons and equipment systems, since the year

2000 which have accrued to the benefit of our troops.

I just wanted to set the record straight. I appreciate the gentleman

for yielding.

I am talking about the armor issue. The point that I made

is the idea of coming to the floor and implying that somehow there was

bad faith in this government for not having the new body armor that our

troops presently have to the tune of 400,000 sets, that somehow that

was a dereliction of duty is also a disservice, not only to the former

Congresses, but also to the former administrations. Because the last

administration in the year 2000 had zero sets of body armor.

Body armor is a new advent, it is a new system. We now have hundreds

of new systems that we have injected into the warfighting theater. So

the idea that we had a ragtag military moving across the berm into Iraq

is also not accurate.

And I would hope that the gentleman would admonish his colleagues who

come to the floor who imply that our people went across that berm

unequipped is also not accurate. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

That is inaccurate if you refer to the historic amount of

body armor that our troops have had.

Then I would say, yes, that is inaccurate. The way the

gentleman stated and if he is not going to qualify it, then that is

inaccurate, because we have never had body armor until this war.

The gentleman and I are good enough friends, if the

gentleman will allow me to make a one-sentence answer.

The answer is, not since 1776 until just a few years ago have

American troops in Vietnam and Korea and World War II, in any war, had

what is known as ballistic body armor. It is a brand-new thing. And we

have got yet new systems that we are going to be putting into the field

shortly. So they don't have the newest and they didn't have the newest.

They now have 400,000 sets. But to imply that that lack of having them

from 1776 to 2000 made them into some type of an unequipped force is

also not fully true.

I thank the gentleman for yielding. And let me say to my

friend, and I listened to the gentlewoman's discussion. The gentlewoman

is a very careful Member of Congress, and she looked at the words and

she asked the question: Does this include, because it appeared that it

refers, the equipage language refers to people who are presently there

but does exclude,

and she is a very careful person and I have been in markups with her

and committee meetings before. She is very careful about wording; words

mean things. That it doesn't refer to people who are going to be

deployed by the President in the future. And her worry, and I think it

was a sincere concern, is that people who may be sent by the President

in the future may end up seeing a cutoff of funds, of supplies, O&M

dollars, as a result of this Congress.

So if the gentleman is assuring us that that is not going to happen,

I think that is good news to the gentlewoman from New Mexico.

Mr. Speaker, thank you, and I wanted to take this couple

of minutes to expand on my conversation with the majority leader.

Mr. Speaker, it has been said a number of times that we went over the

berm and went into Iraq without body armor. In fact, no American troops

until just a couple of years ago, from the time that we were first a

Nation and deployed military forces on our homeland or around the

world, in all those years, in that entire history of the United States,

we never had body armor. I never had body armor in Vietnam. Nobody ever

saw it. We had no body armor in Korea. We had no body armor in World

War II, except perhaps in very, very specialized operations where

perhaps specialized custom-made body armor, that is, bulletproof armor

would be manufactured for some special forces teams or special

operations.

Now, I have in front of me a comparison. This comparison is between a

soldier in 1999, at the end of the last administration and the

equipment that he has, and a soldier today. Now, as you can see, this

is a soldier in 1999. He has a number of accessories. In fact, he has

an M-16; he has a flak jacket; he has gloves; he has load-carrying

equipment; he has protective goggles. He does have a night vision

device. He has also got a helmet and accessories that can be utilized

when he is in combat.

Now, the soldier today has a lot more. That soldier has, for example,

instead of an M-16, he has an M-4 carbine. He has now body armor,

including an outer tactical vest body armor. He has enhanced small arms

protective inserts, called SAPI plates. He has deltoid auxiliary

protection and side plates. He has knee pads. He has more sophisticated

aiming equipment and night vision equipment than his counterpart of

just a couple of years ago.

My point is that whenever new systems are introduced into the force,

and the first thousand or so systems or several thousand systems go

into the force and a battalion or even a brigade has those pieces of

equipment, you can by definition say that everybody else that doesn't

have them is now deficient in equipment. But, in fact, they are not

deficient in equipment. This point was made by a leader in the 101st

Airborne who pointed out that one of his battalions that they looked

at, which was rated the top level of readiness, that is C-1 readiness,

ready to go, ready to fight, in 1999. If you took all of the new

equipment that troops have today and put that new equipment on as a

requirement for that same battle-ready battalion in 1999, they would be

rendered C-4, or unready for battle by definition because they don't

have the new equipment.

So I think one thing we need to do, as we lean on the Army, the

Marine Corps, and the other services to move equipment into the field

quickly, let's not penalize them, and when they move the first several

thousand sets into the field, let's not say, Congratulations, you've

just rendered on paper the rest of your units unready because they

don't have the new stuff you're moving in. That will have a chilling

effect on

what is already a very cumbersome process and a very steep bureaucracy

to get through in terms of moving equipment to the field.

I wanted to just make that point.