Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman very much for yielding.

And I just want to open by saying how encouraging it is to see a

Member like yourself take such a hands-on interest in the affairs of

the Middle East, and I think anyone here tonight or watching these

proceedings would understand your perspective and how informed it is.

Plus you approach it from the purity of an Iowan. And I am very

grateful for your due diligence and for the work that you have done and

the way that you understand these threats.

I was reminded, as you were speaking, that just a couple of years ago

you and I were in Africa together talking about these threats and how

we were concerned that Africa was also at risk with some of the areas

like Somalia, which is in the news again this week, where these

international terrorist networks are, frankly, looking for another

sovereign nation from which to

operate, as they had with Afghanistan, and how global this threat

really is.

I did not come, Mr. Speaker, to the floor tonight to in any way

alienate or accuse anyone here or the other party in this case, because

if ever there was a time in my life where we need Democrats and

Republicans to come together on an issue of national/international

importance, it is this issue. This is where I hope that there are never

partisan motives attached to anyone's position on matters of war and

peace.

I want to go back to the very time when we voted in the House and the

Senate to remove Saddam Hussein by force and remind everyone that over

half of the Democrats in the Senate voted to do so and almost half of

the Democrats in the House voted to do so. And they can say now, oh,

but we didn't have good information or whatever their rationale is for

wanting to pull out abruptly now, but the truth is we are where we are

and this situation is as it is and we are in it together. And if ever

there was a time where Americans need to meet again at the water's

edge, it is now.

I don't want to preempt what the President says tonight. The

President is in a very difficult place because the war has not gone

well. We have made mistakes. We have not implemented certain policies

to the best of our ability. And I think it is important for him to

recognize those flaws and those shortcomings with the mission to this

point because, in my opinion, all great leaders at some point say we

are on the wrong road and we need to get to this road or we have made

this mistake or that mistake and if you will join me, we can rectify

this problem. Because the stakes are enormous, as you said.

The great football coach Vince Lombardi, and football is just

meaningless compared to these matters of war and peace and life and

death, but he said once that fatigue makes cowards of us all. We need

to remember that as a people, as a Nation, because we are all tired of

this. I mean, I am weary of attending funerals in my district. I

attended one with my wife again Monday, another one of a young soldier

who died in Iraq over the holidays. His son was born the day after he

died. We are all sickened by this sacrifice and this loss. But I have

got to tell you if that collectively causes us to lose our passion for

freedom or our will to carry on our way of life, it will be a tragedy

in American history, and these are the decisions of the moment.

Now I know that our friends from time to time quote people, but one

of the people, ironically to me, that serves as kind of the conscience

of some of these international issues is Senator Lieberman of

Connecticut, who ran against, with my fellow Tennesseean Al Gore, the

President and the Vice President. He just returned from this area and

he came back in support of not only continuing our efforts until we can

prevail in Iraq but, if necessary, and I am not endorsing increased

troops tonight and I think the President is going to make his

presentation and he has got a long way to go to convince the country

and the Congress that this is necessary, so I am not endorsing that.

But I am saying that Senator Lieberman came back and effectively

endorsed, in order to control these areas of insecurity particularly

within the 30-mile radius of Baghdad, increasing troop strength and he

talked about ``greatly advancing the cause of moderation and freedom

throughout the Middle East and protect our security at home.'' And I am

very concerned that if we retreat into the 1990 style complacency that

9/11s will continue.

One of the problems is that we did not have enough troops on the

ground, and one of the expressions I wish hadn't been uttered was

``Mission Accomplished'' because there were many difficult days ahead

of us following that unfortunate time. We didn't have enough troops to

secure the area in and around Baghdad, and that is where 80 percent of

the violence is taking place.

Sending more troops to Iraq will not help unless it is coupled with a

concrete and feasible plan and a new strategy that requires the active

participation of the Iraqi government. And the goal should be clear, an

Iraq run by, secured by and governed by the Iraqi people.

Frederick Kagan from the American Enterprise Institute wrote this

week that, ``The real choice we face is this: Is it better to accept

defeat than to endure the pain of trying to succeed.''

I will say it again. ``The real choice we face is this: Is it better

to accept defeat than endure the pain of trying to succeed.''

I don't think we can accept defeat. I don't think we can be seen as

in retreat, and I want to explain why. For one, all of those troops

that have given their lives that I have been with the families of say

to me, We must prevail. We must continue on. My son, my husband, my

father, believed very much that this was a just cause and the right

thing to do, and we must succeed. They have suffered great loss, and

they believe that it is the right thing to do.

But I want to say this, this cannot be George W. Bush's war. This

must be America's fight. We must see people in a bipartisan way come

together around a plan. I don't know if 20,000 troops is the right

number, or 5,000 or 100,000; but we need to come back together because

we are where we are and it is what it is, and if we are ever going to

bring troops home in victory in 18 months or 24 months, we may have to

put our foot down in the short run. Senator Lieberman believes so. The

President believes so. And I hope that the case is made clearly so that

more and more Americans understand this.

Over the last few days, Zawahri, who is now the commander effectively

of al Qaeda in the Middle East, has encouraged these terrorists to go

to Somalia, as I said earlier, in northern Africa to fight the fight.

The truth is this: If we were out of Iraq tomorrow, this threat

continues. This threat did not just happen. September 11th was not the

beginning of this. It was the culmination of them attacking us and our

interests around the world and our sovereign land around the world, at

our embassies. The same people, the jihadists, the extremists.

Read the book ``Hatred's Kingdom'' about wahabism, Qutubi and Azzam.

In the 1950s, they began indoctrinating people on this unbelievably

radical element in Islam to oppose anyone who did not believe as they

believed, and that is the Hezbollah foundation out of Iran, as you say.

When people say these connections were not in place before September

11th, these connections with these terrorist elements have been in

place for years. Don't deny that. You are burying your head in the

sand. Read ``Londonistan'' and how they have infiltrated London. Read

``While Europe Slept'' and how they have infiltrated Europe. Read

``America Alone'' or ``Looming Towers'' and understand that these

threats are our generation's call to courage, and we cannot grow weary

such that we retreat. Too much is at stake.

The President is trying to get us back on the right road. One speech

is not going to do it. Tonight is not going to do it. But I am hopeful

for our country's sake, not my party's sake, not the Democrat's sake,

but for our country's sake so we can find a path forward together. This

cannot be the President's war. It has to be our country's fight against

the jihadists wherever they go, and Iraq is one theater, and they want

to fight us, and we need to defeat them. Let's meet together and send

them back to their caves or into eternity so that our way of life is

carried forward to the next generation.

This is a generational challenge. We can't deny from time to time in

history you have to step up and these brave sons and daughters have

done just that, and they have volunteered to serve. We honor their

sacrifice, but please, House and Senate and country, come together and

find a path forward as one Nation.