Mr. Speaker, today I introduced

legislation, with the support of a number of my colleagues, entitled

the This

legislation is borne from my deeply held belief that we must commend

our military for their exemplary performance and success in Iraq. This

legislation recognizes the extraordinary performance of the Armed

Forces in achieving the military objectives of the United States in

Iraq, encourages the President to issue a proclamation calling upon the

people of the United States to observe a national day of celebration

commemorating the military success of American troops in Iraq, and

provides other affirmative and tangible expressions of appreciation

from a grateful Nation to all veterans of the war in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, as lawmakers continue to debate U.S. policy in Iraq, our

heroic young men and women continue to willingly sacrifice life and

limb on the battlefield. Our troops in Iraq

did everything we asked them to do. We sent them overseas to fight an

army; they are now caught in the midst of an insurgent civil war and

continuing political upheaval. The United States will not and should

not permanently prop up the Iraqi government and military. U.S.

military involvement in Iraq will come to an end, and, when U.S. forces

leave, the responsibility for securing their nation will fall to Iraqis

themselves. However, whether or not my colleagues agree that the time

has come to withdraw our American forces from Iraq, I believe that all

of us in Congress should be of one accord that our troops deserve our

sincere thanks and congratulations.

I very strongly believe that our Nation has a moral obligation to

ensure that our veterans are treated with the respect and dignity that

they deserve. One reason we are the greatest Nation in the world is

because of the brave young men and women fighting for us in Iraq and

Afghanistan. They deserve honor, they deserve dignity, and they deserve

to know that a grateful Nation cares about them.

The legislation that I introduced today, the Military Success in Iraq

Commemoration Act of 2007, pays fitting tribute to the valor, devotion,

and heroism of those who fought in Iraq. First, this legislation

provides an express acknowledgment by the Congress that the objectives

for which the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) resolution

of 2002 authorized the use of force in Iraq were achieved by the Armed

Forces of the United States, which performed magnificently in battle.

It specifically recounts several notable achievements of the Armed

Forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In addition, this legislation authorizes the President to issue a

proclamation calling upon the American people to observe a national day

of celebration commemorating the Armed Forces' military success in

Iraq. This will help ensure that the Iraq War does not suffer the fate

of other open-ended engagements like the Korean War, which is often

called the ``Forgotten War.'' The soldiers who have served valiantly in

Iraq deserve to be recognized and lauded when they return home.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation also authorizes funds to be

appropriated and awarded by the Secretary of Defense to State and local

governments to assist in defraying the costs of conducting suitable

``Success in Iraq'' homecoming and commemoration activities and in

creating appropriate memorials honoring those who lost their lives in

the war. Many of the casualties in the Iraq War come from small towns

and villages in rural or economically depressed areas. The local

governments are already facing substantial fiscal pressures and need

help coming up with the necessary funds.

Finally, my legislation creates a program and authorizes funds to be

appropriated pursuant to which the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall

award to each veteran of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom

a grant of $5,000 to facilitate the transition to civilian life. We

don't want veterans to end up homeless or unemployed or unable to take

their kids on a vacation or start a business. This $5,000 bonus is but

a small token of the affection the people of the United States have for

those who risked their lives so that we may continue to live in

freedom.

Mr. Speaker, outside my office there is a poster-board with the names

and faces of those heroes from Houston, Texas who have lost their lives

wearing the uniform of our country. To date, the U.S. Department of

Defense has confirmed 3838 casualties in Iraq. It is humbling to

recognize how lucky we are to live in a Nation where so many brave

young men and women volunteer knowing they may be called upon to make

the ultimate sacrifice so that their countrymen can enjoy the blessings

of liberty. The intent of my legislation is to pay fitting tribute to

these great men and women and to let them know they will not be

forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to urge all of my colleagues to join me in

recognizing the efforts of our brave men and women in uniform and to

ensure that they can successfully transition to civilian with dignity.

I urge my colleagues to cosponsor this important legislation.