I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I do represent Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base, the

epicenter of the universe. I rise with great pride and admiration to

support this resolution because of those troops.

The tragic events in Spain last week and in Iraq today remind us that

terrorism is an ongoing threat to people around the world. However,

today we live in a world that was different just 1 year ago. The Iraqi

people were living under a tyrant, a brutal dictator who gassed his own

people. The U.S. military victory in Iraq was unprecedented in military

history. Our brave men and women in uniform liberated 24 million Iraqi

people in just 3 weeks. Because of the actions and sacrifices of our

troops, the regime of Saddam Hussein has been deposed and Iraq is on

the path to becoming a free and prosperous nation.

The U.S. military victory in Iraq was truly unprecedented. On March

19, 2003, offensive operations began with air strikes against Iraqi

leadership positions. Operation Iraqi Freedom was executed with a

combination of precision, speed, and force that stunned our enemy.

Soldiers and Marines, many from my home State of North Carolina,

charged to Baghdad across 350 miles of hostile territory in one of the

fastest military advances in the history of warfare. I am proud of

those soldiers at Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base and other posts

around this wonderful country. The Hussein regime fell on April 9. By

April 15 after only 27 days of offensive operations, coalition forces

were in relative control of all major Iraqi cities.

I would like to highlight some of those military victories. Coalition

forces carried out hundreds of raids and thousands of patrols seizing

caches of enemy weapons and massive amounts of ammunition that can no

longer be used against our troops or innocent civilians. As of

February, 44 of the 55 most wanted Iraqi leaders are dead or in

custody.

In addition to bringing down Saddam's regime with great skill,

courage and speed, we can also be proud that our military conducted

operations with minimal collateral damage to the country's

infrastructure. No neighboring countries were hit with Scud missiles,

as was the case in the first Gulf War.

Mr. Speaker, when I was in Iraq, Command Sergeant Major Gainey gave

me the following quote: ``You have never lived until you have almost

died. For those of us that have been deployed or fought for it, freedom

has a

special flavor the protected will never know.''

God bless our troops and protect them.

Mr. Speaker, I represent Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base and I

rise in strong support of this resolution. The tragic events in Spain

last week and in Iraq today remind us that terrorism is an ongoing

threat to people around the world. However, today we live in a world

that was different just one year ago. The Iraqi people were living

under a tyrant, a brutal dictator who gassed his own people. The U.S.

military victory in Iraq was unprecedented in military history. Our

brave men and women in uniform liberated 24 million Iraqi people in

just three weeks. Because of the actions and sacrifices of our troops,

the regime of Saddam Hussein has been deposed and Iraq is on the path

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19, 2003, offensive operations began with air strikes against Iraq

leadership positions. Operation Iraqi Freedom was executed with a

combination of precision, speed and force that stunned our enemy.

Soldiers and Marines, many from my home State of North Carolina,

charged to Baghdad across 350 miles of hostile territory in one of the

fastest military advances in the history of warfare. I am particularly

proud of the soldiers, airmen, special operations forces and others

from Ft. Bragg and Pope Air Force base in my district in North

Carolina. The Hussein regime fell on April 9, 2003 and by April 15

after only 27 days of offensive operations, coalition forces were in

relative control of all major Iraqi cities, including Baghdad, Basra,

Mosul, Kirkuk and Tikrit. Iraqi political and military leadership had

collapsed.

I would like to highlight some of our military victories. Coalition

forces carried out hundreds of raids and thousands of patrols, seizing

caches of enemy weapons and massive amounts of ammunition that can no

longer be used against our troops or innocent civilians. As of February

2004, 44 of the 55 most wanted former Iraqi leaders are dead or in

custody, as well as thousands of other Baath Party loyalists and

terrorists.

In addition to bringing down Saddam's regime with great skill,

courage and speed, we can also be proud that our military conducted

operations with minimal collateral damage to the country's

infrastructure. No neighboring countries were hit with Scud missiles as

was the case in the first Gulf War. There were virtually no instances

of civilian casualties, nor were there large masses of fleeing

refugees. Bridges were captured intact and rail lines protected. Dams

were taken whole and villages were not flooded. Oil fields were

protected and we denied Saddam's regime the opportunity to ignite

widespread oil field fires. Of 250 wells in the key sections of the

Rumaila oil field, only nine were detonated, causing just seven fires.

Operation Iraqi Freedom will go down in military annals as a truly

unprecedented offensive. The Saddam Hussein regime was not a government

of benevolence; it was a reign of terror. The U.S. men and women in

uniform have deposed of that terror with their remarkable achievements.

Mr. Speaker, I have been to Iraq twice: the first time right after

major combat operations ceased and we witnessed a country just

beginning to consider life in the post Saddam era. The second time I

visited was just this past month. Along with Leader Pelosi and Ranking

Member Skelton, we saw incredible progress being made. Command Sergeant

Major Joe Gainey, one of the outstanding soldiers with whom we met,

shared with me his favorite quote. I would like to share it with you:

Our military success is about that freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I extend my heartfelt thanks and admiration to our men

and women in uniform for their service and success. May God protect and

bless them as they secure freedom for Iraq and protect freedom for

America.