Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding.

This week the House has engaged in an important debate on the war in

Iraq and how best to combat terrorism in a post-9/11 world. And there

are major differences between those of us who support a strong national

defense and national security policy and understand what we have at

stake and those who would prefer to retreat from the world stage and

attempt to manage the threat of terrorism and the danger that it poses.

During the 1990s, the enemies of freedom used terror and violence in

futile attempts to intimidate the United States and the cause of

freedom. I will remind all of my colleagues that on February 26, 1993,

we had the first World Trade Center bombing. It killed six people and

injured more than 1,000 people. And on June 25, 1996, a U.S. facility

in Saudi Arabia, the Khobar Towers, was bombed, killing 20 people and

injuring some 372 more. On June 7, 1998, our embassy in Kenya was

bombed, killed 213 people and injured 5,000 people. And on June 7,

1998, the same day, our embassy in Tanzania was bombed, killed 11

people, injured 68 more. On October 12, 2000, the USS Cole was bombed,

killing 17 of our sailors and injuring 39 more.

What was our response? During the 1990s, world leaders looked at the

mounting threat of terrorism, looked up, looked away, and hoped the

problem would go away. But what happened on September 11, 2001? 3,000

Americans were killed by these same terrorists. And in a post-9/11

world, looking up, looking away, and hoping the problem would go away

is no longer the answer.

That is why we are having this important debate here on the floor

today. The American public deserves to hear how their elected leaders

will respond to international terrorism and those enemies who seek to

destroy our American way of life.

Will we fight or will we retreat? That is the question that is posed

to us. Some of my friends on the other side of the aisle often refer to

Iraq as a distraction.

They have called Operation Iraqi Freedom a war of choice that isn't

part of the real war on terror. Someone should tell that to al Qaeda.

Let's be clear here. Those who say this is a war of choice are nothing

more than wrong. This is a war of necessity that we must fight.

But you don't have to believe me. Just listen to al Qaeda's own

leader, their number two leader. Ayman al Zawahiri knows how important

the future of Iraq is to his cause. In a 6,000-word letter to al

Qaeda's then commander in Iraq, the recently eliminated Zarqawi, he

made clear that the terrorists view Iraq as a central battlefield in

the global war on terror.

For some reason, this brazen declaration from one of our nemesis

about Iraq's importance hasn't registered with many opponents of the

war who insist on conceding defeat and withdrawing. If the terrorists

tell us directly they see Iraq as a central front on their violent

ambitions across the globe, should we dismiss it? Should we dismiss

their claims and simply wait for them to attack America?

Operation Iraqi Freedom was hardly a war of choice. Saddam was

already a menace and a threat to international order when he ordered

several divisions of the Iraqi army into Kuwait in 1990. He routinely

supported and openly encouraged acts of terrorism. He relentlessly

persecuted and tortured his own civilian population, including Shiias,

Sunnis, Kurds and others. He engaged in a multi-billion dollar scandal

involving a number of our allies aimed at thwarting the sanctions that

were put in place after the gulf war, and abusing the Oil-for-Food

Program, thus causing even greater harm to his own people.

He refused to disclose and foreswear his maniacal pursuit of weapons

of mass destruction, and he ignored international sanctions and

resolutions passed by the United Nations Security Council. Saddam made

the case for his ouster better than anyone else could.

President Bush said, on the eve of the American-led invasion, that we

would meet the threat before it became imminent, so that we would not

have to meet it later with armies of firefighters, police, doctors and

others on the streets of our own cities.

September 11 made it clear that we could no longer afford to ignore

madmen who threaten our peace and stability. We can no longer let rogue

regimes go unchecked and unchallenged.

And because of the combination of modern technology and a murderous

ideology, we can no longer count on vast oceans or our own military

supremacy to keep America safe. The enemy we must confront does not

accept political negotiations or coexistence. The aims of our enemies

are clear, to destroy anyone who stands for values, beliefs or

political systems which are contrary to their warped and repressive

ideology.

Their aims are to destroy the cause of freedom and democracy itself.

That is why retreat is not an option in Iraq. As part of the global war

on terror, the stakes for the American people are too great. The action

we took in Iraq was in the best interests of the American people and

the world community.

The events of 9/11 demonstrated that we had to show our own resolve

as the world's premier defender of freedom and liberty before such

ideals were

preyed upon rather than after standing witness to their demise at the

hands of our enemies.

Some of my friends on the other side have called the war in Iraq a

failed effort. This is curious, given the constant drumbeat of progress

since the toppling of the Hussein regime. More children are going to

school now in Iraq than at any point in their country's history. The

Iraqis have held successful elections, drafted and ratified a national

constitution, and have put together the first sovereign, free and

unified government in Iraq's history.

Just in the past week we have seen several positive developments in

Iraq and the global war on terror. The U.S. military forces eliminated

the terrorist al Zarqawi, al Qaeda's top commander in Iraq, and a cold-

blooded killer.

The Iraqi Government named new Interior, Defense and Security

Ministers as part of their new government's continued progress. And

President Bush traveled to Baghdad to meet the newly appointed Prime

Minister, Mr. Maliki, to discuss our growing partnership with our new

democratic ally.

Yes, there have been some setbacks. No war is easy, but an honest

account of our effort must acknowledge the staying power of the

insurgency and the support it has received from foreign forces. But the

effort and savagery of these insurgents and their sponsors only

underscores our progress and the importance of this effort in the

global war on terror.

If we had adopted the irrational policies of those who lack

commitment to winning this fight, the terrorist, al Zarqawi, would

still be alive and plotting attacks against Iraqis and Americans.

Defeating repressive, radical terrorists and their allies is our

defining task of the 21st century. Crushing their deadly and poisonous

ideology, freeing from tyranny the millions threatened with its

bondage, is an effort which the United States and her allies are

uniquely suited.

We are the primary target of radical terrorists, and the leader of

nations with the capability and fortitude to wage a prolonged fight

against these people. In my view, we must not shy away, if only so our

children and their children may live in peace.

The American people are understandably concerned about our mission in

a post-Saddam Iraq. There have been many tough days since Iraq's

liberation and transition to a sovereign democracy. Advancing freedom

and building democracies in a part of the world that has known nothing

but tyranny is a difficult task. But achieving victory there and

gaining a democratically in the region will be the best gift of

security we can give to future generations of Americans and Iraqi

people who have longed to rid themselves of tyranny and oppression.

The world scoffed at Ronald Reagan when he said, tear down this wall.

They said communism could never be replaced by freedom. Mr. Speaker,

Mr. Reagan was right. And the editorial writers and many in Congress

back then were wrong. It is that same faith in humanity, that same

faith in freedom that compels us to win in Iraq and to win the global

war on terror. Freedom wins. And we will win, because Ronald Reagan

noted at the Brandenburg Gate, freedom trumps those ancient hatreds.

The freedom to raise your family, the freedom to walk your kids to

school, the freedom to live in peace. As Ronald Reagan said, it is

always freedom that is the victor.

President John Kennedy said once so eloquently, the cost of freedom

is always high, but Americans have always paid it. And one path we

shall never choose, and that is the path of surrender or submission.

This week's debate has given all of us an opportunity to answer a

fundamental question, are we going to confront the threat of terrorism

and defeat it, or will we relent and retreat in the hope that it just

goes away?

Achieving victory is our only option. And for the sake of the

American people and our kids and theirs, we have no choice but to

confront these terrorists, win the war on terror, and spread freedom

and democracy around the world.