Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House

Resolution 861. Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, we have

pursued terrorists and brought them to justice around the world. In

this Global War on Terror--where evil, bloodthirsty fanatics kill to

prevent democracy and liberty from taking root--there is no option for

the forces of freedom but victory. This resolution affirms our

commitment to victory. It is a solemn declaration that we will prevail

over the terrorists, and that we will do so hand in hand with all who

cherish freedom and repudiate extremism.

Mr. Speaker, I came to Congress in January 2001. The Global War on

Terror has been the defining issue during much of my time here on

Capitol Hill. From that perspective, I can state that we have made

tremendous progress in strengthening our defenses at home, and taking

the fight to our enemies overseas.

I visited Iraq for the first time in December 2003, shortly before

the capture of Saddam Hussein. At that time, the Iraqi Governing

Council had been formed, but the Coalition Provisional Authority still

exercised most of the essential functions of government. In December

2003, Iraqi sovereignty seemed possible, but distant.

I returned to Iraq this past Memorial Day recess. We are well on our

way to achieving our goals. The death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the

foreign terrorist who was al-Qaeda's top commander in Iraq, puts us one

step closer to neutralizing the insurgency and defeating the

terrorists. Democracy and liberty have taken root in the heart of a

region that is not known for either. The Iraq I visited two weeks ago

had a sovereign, democratic government; the result of three successful

elections.

And after much negotiation, the Iraqi government recently named

interior, defense, and security ministers. These new ministers will

continue to lead Iraq to security self-reliance.

As an example of the improved security on the ground, it was my honor

and privilege to be part of the first Congressional Delegation to spend

the night Baghdad.

The new leaders of Iraq implored me to bring back a message to this

Congress: Iraq will never achieve security self-reliance if the United

States leaves before its work is done. If we leave before our job is

done, the terrorists and insurgents will not only wreak greater havoc

upon the Iraqi people, but they will also create a terrorist state from

which to perpetrate acts of violence against those who disagree with

their world view.

For the sake of our own national security, we must do everything we

can to support the new leaders of Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I also had the opportunity to visit Afghanistan during

the Memorial Day Recess. President Karzai heads a fully democratic

government, the culmination of a complete transition to democracy.

Women now have the right to vote and work. Although President Karzai's

government has greatly extended its authority, history teaches us that

we cannot let any part of Afghanistan remain a haven for terrorists. We

must continue to pursue, capture, and eradicate the remaining Al Qaeda/

Taliban terrorists.

What I saw overseas is not what is being reported by the media back

home. The Iraqi economy is picking up steam: currency is more stable,

the national stock exchange is up and running, and business

registrations are on the rise. More roads and schools are being built

as we speak, and the oil sector shows promise as pipeline security

efforts increase. In Afghanistan, the Al Qaeda/Taliban terrorists are

on the run and 28% of Afghan Parliament delegates are women.

What our troops told me is not what is being reported either. We have

the finest military in the world, and morale is high. Our brave troops

know the world will be safer when the mission is complete. We must

stand strong and support our troops and allies in this fight against

global terror.