Mr. Speaker, America and its allies are engaged in a

war against a terrorist movement that spans all corners of the globe.

It is sparked by radical ideologues that breed hatred, oppression, and

violence against all of their declared enemies. Since September 11,

2001, the powerful coalition of nations, led by the United States, has

seen many successes against al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. It is

imperative that we remain united and steadfast in the quest to defeat

terrorism around the world.

Last year I traveled to the Middle East to visit with troops in

Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan. I came away with several observations:

First, morale of the troops is HIGH. They are confident of the

progress they have made in the mission to spread freedom and democracy

in the Middle East. Not one serviceman or woman I encountered had any

doubts about the purpose and importance of his or her presence there.

The troops are positive and appreciative of all of the support they

received from back home.

Their confidence in their mission is well-justified. Since my visit,

the Iraqis have ratified a new constitution and installed a new, strong

Prime Minister, Nuri Al-Maliki. And now the latest milestone: Abu Musab

al-Zarqawi, al Qaeda's leader in Iraq, was killed in an air raid last

week.

Mr. Speaker, as I sat in a tent in Kuwait eating dinner with troops

from Texas, I was struck by how young most of them were. Those soldiers

with me were 18-20 years old. Their experiences and their stories

humbled me. Never in my life have I felt such emotion and love for our

service men and women than when I sat and looked at these brave young

soldiers. Barely out of high school, yet each day these heroes awaken

knowing of the perils that lie ahead. Danger awaits them, but they

continue to make a great sacrifice each day so that you and I can be

free.

I sometimes feel that we Americans take our freedoms and our lives

for granted. We forget the images of 9/11. Yet while on my trip to the

Middle East, the London bombings occurred. This was yet another stark

reminder that if we don't fight terrorists abroad, they just get closer

to our home.

Mr. Speaker, the War on Terror is a global effort; it reaches beyond

a small concentration of countries in the Middle East. I'd like to

share the story of Marine Staff Sergeant Nathan Fletcher. Sergeant

Fletcher's wife, Mindy, lived in Dallas and also worked for another war

hero, my fellow Texas Congressman Sam Johnson, on Capitol Hill. He is

currently experiencing his third extended separation from Mindy since

they married a few years ago and the start of the war on terrorism.

Sergeant Fletcher is serving in a very remote region in the Horn of

Africa. He is part of a Combined Joint Task Force focused on defeating

transnational terrorist groups operating in the region. Sergeant

Fletcher and his fellow troops in Africa lack amenities like running

water, reliable power, and air conditioning. There is no internet,

television, or even paved roads. Because they are so far away from the

main camp they eat off the local economy. There are no fruits or

vegetables where he is based, and so far he has

eaten camel, goat, lamb, beef, and a couple things he could not

identify. They cook their meals over an open fire and sleep outside

every night.

Sergeant Fletcher's wife writes, ``His team is doing well and I know

they are working very long hours. I can't imagine going 40 days without

running water in temperatures over 100 degrees without air

conditioning, but I know Nathan and other servicemen and women do it

everyday.'' She continues, ``Iraq and Afghanistan get most of the

focus, but our troops are fighting the global war on terror throughout

the world. I am really proud that he is part of making sure al-Qaeda

and other terrorists aren't able to expand into another part of the

world.''

Mr. Speaker, Sergeant Fletcher and the millions of other troops

fighting the War on Terror around the world believe in what they're

doing. They don't want to stop. They know their mission is right. We

owe it to them to see this campaign for democracy through until we are

completely victorious.

Mindy no doubt wishes that Nathan was at home with her. Nathan no

doubt wishes he was at home sitting in the air conditioning and eating

a t-bone steak rather than camel steak. Yet they both know the reasons

and the importance of the mission.

Mr. Speaker, Sergeant Fletcher is enduring these harsh conditions for

our freedom. Make no mistake--this mission is not only justified, it is

essential. Let us never forget the Pearl Harbors, the attacks of 9/11.

Let us never forget the freedom we have. Let us never forget the

Sergeant Fletchers and the sacrifices they make for us.

Mr. Speaker, we must not lay down our arms now. We must press on, for

freedom, for peace.