Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take this opportunity with a

number of colleagues on the Committee on Armed Services to discuss the

subject on which America is most closely focused right now because we

have troops in combat and that is the Iraq theater of war and the

progress that has been made and the portent for the future.

We all recall when our great servicemen, the 1st Marine Division, the

101st Airborne, the 3rd Army Division, and the many other supporting

elements in the Navy and the Marine Corps and the Army and the Air

Force and the U.S. Coast Guard made that lightning drive for Baghdad

and doing something that most of the critics felt they could not do,

drove past choke points, bridges, oil fields, and other places that we

thought the enemy would blow or disrupt; but the movement was so quick

and so well coordinated that, in fact, we seized most of those

difficult areas before the enemy could take advantage of their

capability to blow them or to make them impassable for our soldiers.

So we drove up right through the center of Iraq, up through the heart

of

Iraq; and we took Baghdad and we started the second chapter of this

centerpiece of the war on terrorism and that is to turn Iraq into a

nation that has a benign intent with respect to the United States, that

is not an enemy of the United States, and, in fact, can be counted on

to be a friend and in that very, very difficult part of the world lying

between Syria and Iran, can be a force for good and an ally of the

United States. It is a very important aspect of our war against

terrorism.

Now we have started the second chapter, and it is a tough chapter. We

have troops engaged in combat right now in areas like Fallujah. We have

the United States Marines in firefights, as we speak, trying to knock

out the resistance to those who do not want to see democracy.

And I think for those who looked at this June 30 hand-over of initial

sovereignty, taking it away from the United States and handing it over,

starting that turn-over of political power, most of us anticipated that

there would be an up-swell in violence. There has been an up-swell in

violence.

And the Marines right now are fighting tenaciously. And we see with

our embedded reporters and our real time television in the city of

Fallujah and other areas, difficult areas, we see clerics like al Sadr

taking advantage of the occupation in an attempt to foment anti-

Americanism and strikes against our troops. We see still the remnants

of Saddam Hussein's regime, those people who had it so good in the days

of the palaces who want to get back into power.

And we have a message for the United States that, I think, is derived

against that background. That message is hold firm. Stay steady,

because we are making steady progress.

And there are people in Iraq who want to be part of this new

government. We have hundreds of little community governments that have

been started up, interestingly, by our military leaders, by these great

wonderful military leaders who are skilled in leadership, who know how

to bring people together, who know how to engineer teamwork. And they

stood up city councils and what I would call county governments across

Iraq.

And those people are working on getting those sewage systems hooked

up, getting that electricity hooked up, getting that water supply to

the neighborhood that does not have it.

And we are also doing great things for the children of Iraq. We are

now at a record level of school attendance. We are doing everything we

can to make sure that Iraqi children are able to go to school, get an

education. We have stood up hospitals. We have allowed a religious

freedom that is unprecedented in modern times where people can go to

the areas that were forbidden by Saddam Hussein. We are hooking up

electrical capability and turning on that great resource for the Iraqi

people, and that is the oil fields.

Now we have had a major, major redeployment of American troops, one

of the biggest in history. And in that redeployment we moved the 1st

Infantry Division up to that very difficult area of operations, up to

the area of Baghdad where the 4th Infantry Division was in place. The

4th Infantry Division is now rotated out. We have moved many elements

from the 1st Marine Division into the area of operations to Fallujah

and points west where the 82nd Airborne was in place and where the 1st

Armored Division was in place. In Baghdad we have moved now the 1st

Cavalry Division. And we have kept most of the 1st Armored Division in

place which, I think, in light of this up-swell in violence, is a very,

very prudent decision by Secretary of Defense Don Rumsfeld and the

President of the United States.

So stay steady should be the order of the day. And we are doing that.

And our troops are doing a wonderful job for us. We know we have got a

ton of National Guard and Reservists in place. And they are doing a

wonderful job for us. And when we finish in Iraq, we cannot guarantee

that the Iraqi people will have freedom forever, we cannot expect them

to turn into Republicans and Democrats. But what we can expect is to

have a nation that has a benign intent toward the United States, that

is has a good relationship toward the United States and refuses to be a

jumping off point for terrorism and a point for unrest and disruption

in that part of the world.

And I still in my mind's eye, I know it was a long time ago and

images move off that TV screen quickly, but I remember the pictures of

the dead Kurdish mothers holding their babies, killed in mid-stride

where that poison gas hit them. I remember those images.

I remember the images of the mass graves that they have uncovered,

many more to be uncovered where people are just now discovering what

happened to their father or their brother.

I remember the story from the farmer who said that every day bus

loads of people would be brought up to his farm and that backhoes that

had dug the trenches the day before would be standing by with new

trenches dug, and the firing squad that worked bankers hours, 9 to 5,

would appear; and they would move people out of the buses from

grandmothers right down to little children, move them up to the edge of

the trenches, and they would each receive one bullet in the back of the

head, and then they would be bulldozed into the trenches.

He recounted one day where the firing squad ran out of ammunition so

they just bulldozed them into the trenches alive. That is the story of

what happened before in Iraq.

And so for people who ask their mothers and fathers when they look

through history and see terrible things in that land, they say why did

we not as Americans do anything about it, they can, with respect to

Iraq, say America did something about it.

Right now we are in a difficult time. Our troops are in battle. Now

we should stay firm. We should stay steady.

Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to yield to my colleague, the gentleman

from Minnesota (Mr. Kline), who had a great career in the United States

Marines, who does a great service on the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his very eloquent

remarks. I am reminded that we have a lot of folks fighting the war

against terrorism in Afghanistan and in other parts of the world. We

are equally grateful to them. I thank him for the experience he brings

to the committee and his good judgment.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield on that one

point, I remember one story in the Post and I believe it was fairly

well-documented about a high school class in Baghdad where the high

schoolers, several of them wrote anti-Saddam Hussein remarks on the

blackboard. They disappeared, and their families discovered after some

years they had been hung. So high schoolers were taken out and hung for

making anti-Saddam remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I might just ask the gentleman what his

basic take was on the GIs that he met with while in Iraq?

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his trip, and I

want to thank all the Members who have gone, Republican and Democrat.

We have had a great majority of the members of the committee go to Iraq

and spend a lot of time with the troops. We really appreciate that.

Incidentally, I would ask my colleagues, the gentleman from Virginia

(Mr. Forbes) and the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. Jo Ann Davis), the

gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Schrock), and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr.

Turner), I will ask the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Turner) to talk to us

a little bit next. But if anybody needs to leave early, we will make

sure that they get a chance to speak before we go on.

I want to thank the gentleman for his great work on the Committee on

Armed Services. It is a big commitment to go to Iraq and take that big

block of time, and it is not easy, not convenient and under the rules

and the tough aspects of flying into some of those areas now it is a

little bit of an ordeal. I want to thank the gentleman for taking the

effort and really caring about our troops.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Turner) for any

remarks he would like to make.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to thank the gentleman for his

great service in the Committee on Armed Services and his expertise to

the markups we have had; also to his commitment to our people in

uniform.

Let me ask the gentleman his ideas on the morale of our troops. I

understand this is a tough and difficult time. What is your take?

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Let me ask the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Forbes), who actually

arrived first for this special order. I want to thank him for his

special efforts and all the great service on the committee, and all the

work he does for the people who wear the uniform for the United States.

Please tell us about your experience in Iraq.

We are all working together.

On that point, too, I would say to my good friend from

Virginia, one thing that I think Americans understand is that we now

live in an age where we have to preempt, we have to go abroad, we have

to go after the bad guys. That is what this President has done

aggressively. He has gone after the bad guys. Up to that point we had

had attacks on the Cole, we had attacks on embassies, we had terrorist

acts around the world and we threw a few cruise missiles. We got a

pharmacy knocked out, a pharmaceutical plant, and a relatively empty

training ground in Afghanistan and two Chihuahuas and I do not think we

hit the Chihuahuas under a previous administration, and I am being

facetious. Actually, they were not effective enough to get Chihuahuas.

So we had a very limited response to terrorist acts against our people.

It killed our people.

This President has gone after the bad guys in a furious way, and we

have taken out terrorists in places where they never thought we would

show up.

We had the 10th Mountain Division guys come up over the top of those

mountains at 10,000 feet elevation and, they killed these guys at close

range in their foxholes and their fighting positions.

We had people who went to meeting places where they thought they were

totally meeting in secret, except for a team of Navy SEALS who had

shown up before they did by great exertion and got there ahead of them.

We have got American Marines right now locked in firefights at close

range in Fallujah, where literally one mud wall may separate our forces

and automatic weapons fire coming from the other side.

So we have gone after the bad guys aggressively and there have been

some rewards, and I think Americans reflect on those rewards.

Mr. Khadaffi, who caused us enormous problems and caused us to have

to take military action after he killed American servicemen through

terrorist activities in Germany, and I remember the strike on the Gulf

of Sidra that was made under Ronald Reagan. He decided, and I think one

reason he decided was because of what he saw on his television set, he

decided to start turning his nuclear program over to the United States

and turning over tens of millions of dollars worth of equipment, and I

think that is because he looked at his television set and he saw Saddam

Hussein being led out of his spider hole and decided that he did not

want to be in that position some day, and so we are now disarming Libya

of its nuclear program without firing a shot. That is one result, one

reward of having a President who has gone aggressively after the bad

guys, and I think Americans understand.

I thought what a great thing as I drove up from the gentleman from

Virginia's (Mr. Schrock) district the other day, through the

gentleman's district and through the gentlewoman from Virginia's (Mrs.

Jo Ann Davis) district, what a wonderful thing that we, millions of

Americans, live this great life, springtime in America, and you can

drive up that highway, you can see the new rose buds coming out and the

dogwoods blossoming, and we live this wonderful life with our families

in security because we have great people in uniform who are

aggressively going after the bad guys.

We found out in 9/11 what happens when we do not aggressively go

after the bad guys, when we bomb an empty pharmaceutical plant in

response to killings of Americans.

So I think the American people kind of understand that, and I think

that has been reflected in every poll, and these things never come

wrapped, I have discovered, in neat packages. Nothing ever flows

smoothly. Lots of mistakes are made in wars. You have lots of problems

with your logistics lines.

I would like to see our armored situations coming along faster than

they are. Even though we now have some 7,000 out of our 12,000 Humvees

in theater, are now totally remanufactured Humvees or they are up-

armored, I would like to see all 12,000 that the Army has up-armored. I

would like to see more gun trucks, more armored five tons, seven tons.

This President has aggressively gone after the bad guys, and in those

actions and the actions of our great people in uniform we have put the

United States in a much better position than we were just a few years

ago, and I thank the gentleman for talking about this.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her great

service on the Committee on Armed Services and her dedication to our

people in uniform. What a wonderful, wonderful statement she has made,

and especially relating it to the people that wear the uniform, because

they are literally America's heart and soul over in that military

theater.

So I thank the gentlewoman from Virginia very much, and now I would

like to yield to the gentlewoman's colleague, the gentleman from

Virginia (Mr. Schrock), who has done a great job on our committee and

works very hard and has served our people in uniform, so he has a

little background there himself.

Let me ask the gentleman what his take is on the situation in Iraq

right now. How does my colleague see it?

I think the gentleman understands, too, that there is no

substitute in terms of a dramatic picture on the television screen for

a burning truck or for an explosion or bullet-riddled vehicle. That,

unfortunately, tends to sell more Coca Cola

I would compare it to some of the TV stations who say we

are going to make our 5 o'clock news wall to wall wrecks. We are not

going to have a lot of content, but we are going to have wall to wall

wrecks, and we will get a certain viewership just from doing that. I

think nationally you see the same thing. So they do not see the good

things. An electric line being hooked up will put you to sleep, and it

is nothing like a burning vehicle. I think that is one of the things

that we are fighting against. I am glad the gentleman is here to talk

about the accomplishments.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for those great

statements because he has worn the uniform for a long time himself. The

gentleman's feeling is that our people have good morale?

What is interesting, too, Mr. Speaker, is that those who

have stepped back from the fray, some of the Arab nations, like Saudi

Arabia, have now discovered that they are targets; that you cannot, by

staying away from this fight that the Americans have taken on, because

we face our threats head on and take them on, they thought somehow they

could stay out of the battle and they could stay away from the

brutality of the terrorist groups. But they have discovered now they

cannot do that. Jordan is discovering it cannot avoid this conflict.

And I think there is another thing, too, that the world understands,

and perhaps more leaders in the world need to be educated on this. We

won World War II. We could have enslaved Germany and Japan. And

certainly after what Japan did to us with the surprise attack at Pearl

Harbor, the Japanese people were told by their military leaders to

expect us to be as brutal to them as they had been to other people.

They decapitated our POWs. They killed about a third of them. They

killed 100,000 people when they took Nan-King, China. They speared live

people on their bayonet courses. They captured Chinese civilians.

They did all these brutal, horrible things, and they warned their

people, they are now going to do to us what we have done to them. But

American GIs walked down the streets of Tokyo and handed out Hershey

bars. That character has not changed.

When we look at the guys walking down the streets of Baghdad with a

bunch of kids standing around them, we see the same character. In fact,

many of those guys are the grandchildren of people who served in World

War II and the children of people who served in Vietnam.

That takes me to one thing, too, that I thought was very relevant,

and that is the fight over the Presidency and Senator Kerry's

participation in the Vietnam War, for which he should be credited, but

also the accountability that he should take for what he said about his

fellow GIs.

If we were to take three of the statements Senator Kerry has said,

the one where he said 80 percent of us were stoned on dope 24 hours a

day; the one where he said that we murdered 200,000 people, that was

two of those statements; and the one where he said that we ravaged the

countryside, cutting off limbs and murdering people in a manner, quote,

reminiscent of Ghengis Khan, if Senator Kerry had said that our GIs in

Iraq, as they were driving up that country, if he had come on

television and said the American soldiers in Iraq are stoned 24 hours a

day, 80 percent of them; that they have murdered 200,000 Iraqis, and

they are ravaging Iraq in a manner reminiscent of Ghengis Khan, the

American people would be picketing his office by the tens of thousands,

and he would be on his way out immediately.

So if we just juxtapose and take off that word Vietnam from the

statement he made in 1971, where he said American GIs were ravaging

Vietnam like Ghengis Khan and had murdered 200,000 people, if we took

out Vietnam and put Iraq on it, I think Americans today can understand

why a lot of Vietnam veterans feel no close kinship to Senator Kerry.

Because those guys that were driving up there through the heart of Iraq

taking that shot and shell and heading for Baghdad, those kids were the

same guys we had in Vietnam. Many of them were the sons and grandsons.

Same character, same characteristics, same sense of honor, and doing

the same great thing for the people.

Lastly, I remember the pictures of the people, of all the hundreds of

thousands of Vietnamese who tried to swim after the Americans after we

left Vietnam. I remember also the pictures of the people being held in

the Hong Kong camps who were now going to be forcibly repatriated back

to what I guess Mr. Kerry's cohorts would call the people's working

paradise in Vietnam. They were holding on to the guards and they were

shrieking and they were beside themselves. They would do anything and

had to be sedated to be finally put on the planes to be carried back to

Communist Vietnam.

That showed, to a large degree, the character of the Americans that

had been in Vietnam. If we had been bad to the people, they would not

have tried to swim after us after we left. And they are today in our

populations by the hundreds of thousands.

So I thought about that when I watched that embedded news following

our kids in the 1st Marine Division in Iraq and following the 101st

Airborne and the 3rd Army and the 4th Infantry Division. Same people,

same GIs, same good people.

Well, I think American Vietnam veterans should simply

look at his statements, and if they agree with those statements, if

they did those things, and they think that is accurate, then they

should vote for Mr. Kerry.

Stay steady.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest the gentleman not

praise me too much, because this Special Order has to stay credible.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his great remarks, and I now

want to welcome the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. Wilson), who is

carrying on the great tradition of Floyd Spence, my great buddy and

friend and former chairman of the Committee on Armed Services. I thank

him for the sacrifices his family has made and he has made in being in

the service, and for his dedication to our people in uniform.