Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding. I thank

him for his leadership on the Committee on Armed Services and

everything he is doing to take care of our men and women who are

leading in this war on terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the heroes, not in the large

sense, but in the individual sense, the heroes that we have in this

war, fighting in this war in Afghanistan and in Iraq. And,

specifically, I would like to share the story today of just one of the

many committed Marines. And I know that the gentleman's son is in the

Marines, and we share some common bond here; but one of the Marines

that is serving today in Iraq has an incredible story.

I was talking to the commandant of the Marines this week. He was in

an airplane, I think he said at 48,000 feet. It is amazing how we fly

these airplanes these days. He was telling me the story of Sergeant

Christopher Chandler. I wanted to share that today because it is a

story of resolve, determination, love of country, and love of the

American people. It is an example that we see in other men and women in

uniform, but this one is particularly special.

I have got some notes here to make sure I get the dates and times

right. In November of 2001, Sergeant Christopher Chandler answered the

call to service in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Less than

one month into this assignment, Sergeant Chandler stepped on a land

mine while providing security for an explosive ordnance disposal unit

in Kandahar, Afghanistan; and he lost a leg.

Sergeant Chandler was one of the first service members injured in the

global war on terrorism after the attacks on 9/11 and the first

American to be awarded the Purple Heart in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Despite the severity of his injury, he refused to let the incident

diminish his resolve.

Following the incident, Sergeant Chandler was evacuated to Walter

Reed Army Medical Center where he received treatment and was outfitted

with a prosthetic leg.

Neither his injury nor the immediate danger he experienced were able

to stifle the determined spirit of Sergeant Chandler. Upon completion

of physical therapy, he re-enlisted in the Marine Corps and requested a

seat in the U.S. Army jump school.

His request was met, as I am sure you can imagine, with some

resistance. He was informed that no exceptions could be made for any

physical limitations. He would be required to complete every

task and fulfill each training requirement at the same level of

excellence as everyone else attending that jump school.

He accepted the challenge. He excelled. He was able to demonstrate to

the physical evaluation review board that he was fit to return to full

active duty without limitations. He became the first amputee to

complete Army jump school.

The story is not over. In December of 2003, Sergeant Chandler

graduated, exceeding all expectations by being selected the

noncommissioned officer honor graduate of his class.

Today Sergeant Chandler is serving our Nation bravely as a member of

the 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance in Iraq.

It has been said that the truest test of a man's character is not

what he does with success, but what he makes of defeat. For

generations, the Marine Corps has trained recruits with this type of

determination and instilled the courage in its men and women to move

forward when those around them have faltered. Sergeant Chandler is a

leader, but he is not the only one.

Thousands of terrific men and women have answered the call to serve

because they know how important this service is to the security of

America and to a stable world. And these brave men and women deserve to

know that they have our unconditional love and support.

In those discussions with the Commandant of the Marine Corps, as I

mentioned earlier, and he has just returned from Iraq only just a

couple of weeks ago, he shared with me the single most asked question

about the families of the American and women serving at every level and

by the men and women themselves in the Marine Corps. And the question

is, Do we still have the backing of the American people?

He answers unequivocally yes. We need to make certain that stays so.

These men and women who face danger each day on our behalf see and hear

the same newscasts that we do. We cannot allow the morale of our troops

to be diminished by these negative reports.

Mr. Chairman, you are absolutely right. We have to stay the course.

We have a responsibility to make our support known, our emotional,

financial, all levels of support to every man and woman who serves this

Nation. We owe them no less. We cannot show any weakening of resolve.

It is a commitment that we have to Sergeant Chandler and to all the

Marines and soldiers serving over there.

I know, Mr. Chairman, you are giving them your unqualified support

and I pledge mine, and I ask my colleagues and the American people to

do the same.