Mr. Chairman, I first want to congratulate you on

your comments that you have made about the importance of our troops

having the necessary equipment and protective gear. You have been a

leader, as has our President, in making certain that they have the

resources necessary in order to protect themselves, and that of course

was not without opposition.

There has been significant opposition in supporting our troops and

our funding, and our President has stood fast and so have you in making

sure that they have had the correct armor, the Humvees had the correct

armor, and that we work diligently to bring those supplies and

equipment to our troops.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to travel to Iraq with the

gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Saxton) of the Subcommittee on

Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities under the

gentleman's committee. We had the opportunity to go to Bahrain, Saudi

Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, and Kuwait.

Throughout our trip there was not anyone that we met with in any one

of those countries who did not identify Iraq as part of the war on

terror. They all reported that Saddam Hussein was a threat to the

safety in the Middle East, safety to the United States and safety of

the Western civilized world, and understood how important it was that

the United States win this effort and stick to this effort of

stabilizing Iraq and of the removal of Saddam Hussein.

Now, everyone has their stories of when they were in Iraq as to what

they saw. One that touched me the most, I served as the former mayor

for the City of Dayton and I had the opportunity to talk with some of

the mayors that were emerging for some of the towns and cities in Iraq,

and they were able to talk to us about the path to liberty. These were

men who were absolutely committed to serving their communities, who had

the challenges that every community does, in dealing with the areas of

infrastructure and sanitary issues, sewer issues, their police, the

safety of their people, but had a glint in their eye of the commitment,

of the understanding of what was more important of what they were

doing.

They were not mayors who were just concerned about the public

services that a city provides, but they were concerned about the path

to liberty, the support the United States was providing to them and

their ability to stabilize their country.

Each of them was serving at a tremendous risk to themselves and their

family, knowing that the idea that they were standing for, the beliefs

that they were standing for, of liberty, was jeopardizing their life

and the lives and the safety of their family.

Now, recently, I had someone ask me why did I think the conflict in

Iraq was increasing currently. I think we all know that as we take a

look at Iraq and its path to liberty that there are those that

benefited from the brutal regime of Saddam Hussein. There are those who

benefited from this brutal dictatorship and they do not want to see

this path to liberty this country is taking. They would prefer to have

a brutal dictatorship that delivers out power and benefits to the few

instead of the country benefiting from the freedom of all.

I think the President's efforts in Iraq are best shown in the efforts

that we have recently seen in Libya. We know that as a result of Iraq

and the removal of Saddam Hussein, that Moammar Khadaffi has come

forward and offered up his nuclear weapons program to the United States

and other countries, indicating that he is abandoning his efforts of

pursuing the weapons of mass destruction, particularly in the area of

nuclear weapons and that he was much more advanced than what we had

thought.

What we know is by pulling Saddam Hussein out of a spider hole, in

Libya we have seen that Moammar Khadaffi and the Libyans have coughed

up their nuclear weapons program again to the greater safety of the

world and to the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the chairman's leadership on this issue and

for continuing to focus on the issue of protecting our troops.

Mr. Speaker, when I am asked this back at home

about the issue of morale of our troops, I always tell everyone there

are two components of morale. One is are you sure of your purpose? Two,

do you want to come home?

Everyone I met with, of course, wanted to come home and had very

compelling stories of the sacrifice they were making in being away from

their families. But everyone was absolutely sure of their purpose, not

just for the liberation of Iraq but for the absolute nexus of their

work for their safety of the United States. They know they are on the

front lines of the war on terror and the war on terrorism. They know

the efforts they are doing is making America safer.

Every one of them when I asked about their commitment to being in

Iraq, their desire to stay and finish the job, were absolutely

committed to this, and from that I would say their morale was very high

because they were doing what they love, which is defending our country

and advancing the freedom and the safety of our country.