Mr. Chairman, first of all, we want to thank you for your

diligent efforts on behalf of our men and women in uniform.

It is an important thing and we appreciate your

leadership on this. I appreciate your conducting this special order

tonight, because as you know so oftentimes the men and women fighting

in Iraq never get their voices heard here. We hear a lot of negative

voices and a lot of other things in the media, but they do not get to

speak out unless we bring that message here.

Just a few nights ago I had an opportunity to speak to a large group

of students, and they were in high school,

and they had all been high achievers and had great academic excellence,

and as I walked in that big auditorium, I was looking at all the

students. I could not help but think that we had men and women over in

Iraq who were just a couple of years older than they were, and because

of their courage and what they were doing, that those students were

able to meet there that night in freedom and in safety because these

men and women in uniform from this country have gone there and taken

the fight to the terrorists so that we are fighting in Iraq instead of

fighting over here in our streets and in our hallways over here.

Mr. Speaker, it just makes you proud to be a part of those young men

and women.

Mr. Speaker, I think one thing that September 11 shows

very clearly is that we are going to fight this fight. The question

that is left is just where are we going to fight the fight, whether we

are going to fight it on our soil, we are going to fight it where the

terrorists are.

It is interesting if you took a microphone and interviewed each one

of our men and women in uniform, as I know you do when you are in Iraq

and you try to talk to them and we talk to them here, to the person,

they will tell us this is a fight that we have to win, we need to be

there.

One of the things that, as I was just looking at that large group of

high school students, I kind of threw away my speech and I was trying

to think what could I tell them. The one thing that I told them was

whatever you do. do not quit, and I remembered a story of a group of

airplanes that had been lost over the Atlantic. They were trying to

come into Florida. They had lost communications and it was dark. They

were running out of fuel, and they did not know if they were heading in

the right direction, and about 15 minutes before the lights would have

opened up, they would have seen the base in Florida, they turned

around, headed back out to the Atlantic, and they were never heard of

again because they quit.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just close with one statement that I heard

from a sergeant that was over there in Iraq. When we were in Iraq, we

stopped by Ramstein Air Force Base. As you know, that is where we take

all of our wounded soldier, and there was this young sergeant who was

25 years old, Puerto Rican soldier, who was in there. I went in and I

talked to him, and literally in broken English he was telling me his

story, how these terrorists had got him in Iraq and he had sent his

platoon back. For 2 1/2 hours he would not quit. He continued to fight

the terrorists and to fire his gun. They finally came in, took him off

on a stretcher. He continued firing.

Mr. Speaker, he was shot in his arm. He was shot in his hip. The

bottom bone in his leg was blown out, and when they took him into

surgery in Ramstein, the doctors told me that as he was literally

heading into surgery he looked at them and said I just have two things

to ask you. He said, one, try to save my leg, which they were able to

do; and the second thing he told them, which was a refrain we are

hearing over and over and over again from our men and women over there,

he said get me back to my troops.

I went in and I put my arm on his shoulder, Mr. Speaker, and it was

all I could do to hold back the tears, and I said I just do not know,

Sergeant, how to thank you for what you have done. Without even

thinking about it or batting an eye, he looked at me, and he said,

Congressman, it was a privilege for me to be shot for my country and

for freedom.

Mr. Speaker, he did not quit on us, and this country is not going to

quit on him, and thank you for holding this special order tonight.