Mr. Speaker, I want today to express

in the strongest possible way my support for our Nation's ongoing

missions to sow the seeds of liberty, security and prosperity in Iraq,

and as you know and as you said, you have been through my district and

you know that I represent an area in Virginia where thousands upon

thousands of service members live and train, and those service members

I represent and their families and all of our men and women in the

military and their families. I want to say right now how much I thank

them for everything that they are doing and that they are sacrificing

for our country.

It is one of the most honorable things that anybody could do, and

most Americans have absolutely no idea how much dedication and

commitment it truly takes to do what they do, and for that I and so

many of our Members of Congress are truly grateful, as I know all the

members on our Committee on Armed Services are.

Mr. Speaker, I feel very strongly that Congress and the

administration cannot afford to lose sight of how important it is that

our mission succeeds in Iraq. Failure is not an option, and the gravity

of the implications for the broader war on terror and the security of

so many things is so enormous, and I would like to talk a little bit

now about our Marines operating in Fallujah and the nobility and the

goodness of their brave devotion to duty under fire from a largely

faceless enemy. Their courage, their competence and commitment are the

hallmark of everything that is and ever will be great about America.

Our duty under Article I, section 8 of the Constitution, not to

mention our own constitutional oath, absolutely compels us to make

difficult choices in staying the course, regardless of the prevailing

political winds at home and overseas. Anything else would dishonor the

service of our Marines, our soldiers, sailors and airmen and all others

who are supporting our effort, as well as the legacy and the memory of

brave generations of all who have gone before them.

Mr. Speaker, I will insert the full text of an April 25, 2004,

article from the Los Angeles Times, which I am going to make reference

to, with my statement in the record, and I would like to call my

colleagues' attention to that article entitled: ``Keeping Spirits Up

While They Hunker Down; Humor and a Lid on Emotions Help Echo Company's

Marines Stay Focused in Fallouja.''

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to say that I know a friend and Naval

Academy classmate of the commander of Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st

Marine Regiment, the unit profiled in this story. The enthusiasm of the

Echo Company commander that is referenced in this story is, as I can

tell you firsthand, an absolutely contagious thing.

It is vivid in friends of the company commander halfway around the

world, and I trust and pray that it is also in the young Marines under

his charge in Echo Company. We should consider ourselves blessed that

we have this quality of leadership so abundantly present in our young

officers who are on the tip of the spear in Fallujah and places like

it.

Captain Doug Zembiec, the leader of Echo Company, embodies everything

that we envision in the young American officers with whom we entrust

the lives of our young men and women.

I would like to read an excerpt from the article that I referenced

before. It reads:

``Just as the chaplain Saturday started to lead a group of Marines in

song, a Marine sniper on the roof let loose several thunderous rifle

blasts at armed insurgents moving into position for a possible attack.

If the Marines in the room below took any notice, they didn't show it.

Instead, they launched into 'Lord, we lift Your name on high.'

``For the young men of Echo Company of the 2nd Battalion, 1st

Regiment of the 1st Marine Division, the sound of sniper fire, or

mortar rounds, rockets or bursts from automatic weapons is hardly

noticeable anymore.

``Other companies and other battalions have done their share of

fighting in Fallujah, but none have done more than Echo Company of the

2nd Battalion, 1st Regiment, 1st Marine Division,'' and I am still

quoting from the article.

``All military groups take on the personality of their commander. For

Echo Company, that's Captain Douglas Zembiec, 31, of Albuquerque, a

balding, gregarious man who, in glasses, looks like a high school

science teacher but was a former wrestler at the Naval Academy.

``Zembiec believes in leading from the front. He led the charge into

hostile fire that started the Marine assault April 6 on the

neighborhood and has been known to disregard his own safety to get a

clear radio transmission during combat.

``His admiration for his troops is hard to contain.

`` `They're fired up, they're motivated,' he said while filling out

forms requesting medals for bravery for several of his men. `These are

young men who grew up wanting to be defenders. What other kind of job

has this kind of honor and danger?'

``Gunnery Sergeant Daniel Jonas, 35, of San Diego, who served in

Operation Desert Storm and Kosovo, said Zembiec's enthusiasm and his

policy of giving authority to enlisted Marines have helped sustain

morale.

`` `This is a very close company,' he said.

``There are, inevitably, strong bonds formed from facing danger and

from their mutual dependence.

`` `We're out here for each other,' said Private First Class Bernard

Boykin, 21, of Eugene, Oregon. `I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.'

``And what will the men of Echo Company remember when it is over?

`` `I'll always remember the good times, the jokes, the stories,'

said Lance Corporal Chris Hankins, 19, of Kansas City, Missouri. `But

the bad things, the dead bodies, seeing my friends bleeding and being

carried away, I hope to forget that.' ''

Mr. Speaker, it is beyond me how any American could read this

article's capsule of a leader's laser-like vision of his mission, the

resolve of those under his charge, and the mutual esteem and faith that

they are driven by and not be deeply moved and humbled. It should

remind us to the depths of our being how fortunate we are to be

Americans.

It is the service of Echo Company and their contemporaries that we

cannot dishonor by failing to stabilize Iraq. Regardless of one's view

on what led us there, our vision of the need to stay the course there

absolutely must be a common one. As you have said, Mr. Speaker, we have

got to remain steady, and that is the one thing that is the message

that we have got to send to the American people, we have got to send to

our troops who are over there fighting for us.

Before closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Colonel

Michael Shupp, our former Marine House liaison director who will

shortly be assuming command of the 1st Marine Regiment in Iraq.

Colonel Shupp took me on my first CODEL to Afghanistan, and I have

watched him as he has been readying to change and to go over to Iraq to

command the 1st Marine Regiment in Iraq.

And I have seen the excitement and the grin on his face that you

cannot keep him from showing when he is ready to leave to go over and

do his duty. That is what our Marines are like. That is what every one

of our men and women in uniform are like. That is why we have to stay

steady on this course.

Colonel Shupp, who is a proud graduate of VMI, has been a treasured

friend to all of us, and I know I speak for all 434 of my colleagues.

We will sorely miss him, but I know that our country needs people like

Captain Zembiec, that I referenced, and Michael Shupp if we are to

succeed in filling our oath to preserve, protect, and defend the

Constitution.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from

California and all the members of the House Committee on Armed Services

who have fought so diligently to fight and protect and give our men and

women in the military what they need so that we can stay the course and

stay steady.

Mr. Speaker, I submit for the Record the Los Angeles Times article I

referred to earlier.