Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Texas for her

kind comments. I ran into a number of great troops from Texas, from Ft.

Hood, TX, and individuals from Texas who are doing a fabulous job,

putting their lives on the line and showing the definition of courage

and honor. Those guys go right into the face of the fire, and when the

fire fight comes when the bullets are flying, they are running towards

the fire. It was really a beautiful modern-day story of courage under

fire and of doing the right thing.

That right thing is now yielding, in the last week, multiparty

elections in Egypt. Mubarak has not stood for elections in 25, 30

years. It is going to do that. With a protest now taking place, the

Lebanese Government has withdrawn and is asking Syria to withdraw and

to allow democracy to flourish in Lebanon. Saudi Arabia had flawed

local elections, but they at least had somewhat of an election.

I met with officials in Iraq who are now discussing how to maintain a

balance of power and an open society. The policies in Iraq are yielding

enormous fruit--still difficult, still very fragile, but those soldiers

who have put so much on the line are really changing the world. I thank

my colleague from Texas for her support in that effort. What we are

seeing taking place in that region is amazing.

Our troops are in harm's way. We continue to see the number of

improvised explosive devices about the same as they have in the past,

although our number of wounded troops has gone down in the last 2 weeks

about 40 percent, which is encouraging. That also means, apparently,

that more of the attacks are directed at the Iraqis. We saw yesterday

the horrific tragedy, over 100 Iraqis killed in a massive car bomb,

that clearly the insurgency, much of it commanded and controlled out of

other countries--and Syria has complicity of allowing some of this

operation to take place--has to be pressured against that. But we have

to get at that command and control structure of the insurgency and

break that to be able to stop some of this incredible carnage that is

taking place, people being killed in a country that just seeks to be

free, seeks to be an open, fair society. It is difficult. In the early

stages of democracy there will be flaws and missteps, but it is really

changing the face of the region.

I met with Prime Minister Allawi. I met with the head of the Kurdish

group, and Shias, Dr. Joffee. Each is talking about bringing in the

Sunnis, working together, creating an open society. I am concerned

about the issue of the role of Islam in the constitution. That is

clearly one of the key issues being negotiated.