Mr. Speaker, on June 30th, Iraq will assume control

of its own destiny. Iraq will enter the post-Saddam era with the hope

of the world resting upon them. No longer will the Iraqi people be

subjected to a climate of fear and desperation. Saddam's murderous,

thieving cronies have been removed. Uday and Qusay's henchmen likewise,

will no longer be free to roam the streets, terrorizing their people.

The challenge now for the Iraqi people and their new government is to

set their future on a course for open thought, popular choice of their

leaders, and freedom of action in which to conduct their lives and

their futures.

The Iraqi people must understand that, with this new-found freedom

comes responsibility--a responsibility to remember the interests of all

Iraqis. Each and every Iraqi has a stake in that nation's future and

now with our transfer of sovereignty to them, that stake can be fully

realized.

We are thrilled to have played a role in empowering the Iraqi people

and supporting them in their efforts to rebuild their country, after

decades of corruption and oppression. They have the opportunity to make

their nation a shining light for all to see, not only in the Middle

East, but around the world. A nation filled with talent beyond

imagination, Iraq can create a climate of freedom and opportunity for

others to emulate.

Problems have arisen. Yet, we must all acknowledge that this

opportunity could not have

happened without the brave men and women of the United States military.

Through their courage, commitment and sacrifice, we have managed to

free an enslaved people. We have brought down a tyrant who killed as

many as one million of his own people.

And thus, history will record that the United States brought a beacon

of light and hope to a people who had only known misery, suffering, and

brutality under Saddam Hussein. The future will judge us to have done

right for the Iraqi people and for our nation.

We are, however, not naive about the challenges that lie ahead.

Freedom and democracy take time and hard work. They take vigilance and

dedication to truth and a commitment to justice. These are things that

come with patience. The terrorists want to deprive the Iraqi people of

their future. But Iraq can and will prevail.

Iraq's chance is now. Let us stand by the Iraqi people as they

struggle to enjoy those rights and liberties that they denied for so

long. Let us be motivated by the knowledge that we have helped make the

world a better place for the Iraqi people and for all.

As our beloved former President, Ronald Wilson Reagan, would say:

``You and I have a rendezvous with destiny . . . If we fail, at least

let our children and our children's children say of us we justified our

brief moment here. We did all that could be done.''