Mr. Speaker, ten days from today, on

Wednesday, June 30, 2004, a historic day will occur in the cradle of

civilization: the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) will formally

transfer power and sovereignty to an Iraqi Interim Government (IIG). We

are ten days to sovereignty.

This step will be the most dramatic to date in a series of planned

moves towards more democratic and representative government in Iraq.

Since the elimination of the brutal Hussein regime, which terrorized

and abused the Iraqi people for decades, significant changes have taken

place, helping to put the country on a path to democracy, respect for

human rights and economic prosperity.

About 33,000 secondary school teachers and 3,000 supervisors have

been trained as part of an effort to upgrade the quality of education

and level of learning in Iraq. Nearly 2,000 schools have been

rehabilitated and an additional 1,200 schools are expected to be

completed by the end of the year. New textbooks are also being

developed and utilized. No more government mandates for indoctrinating,

inciting hatred or demonizing Americans, the West, or Jewish people

through the use of school books.

Last month, the first of several planned sewer treatment plants came

online, ushering in a new era of sanitation and public health in an

area rife with disease. On the technology side, the total number of

telephone subscribers in Iraq is now over 1.2 million, which includes

429,000 cell phone subscribers--representing a 45% improvement above

pre-war levels.

And, Iraqis want to be the business leaders in their new country.

Already, 2,500 micro-credit clients have applied and received small

business loans to help them build a free economy with robust industry.

It is important to note that inflation is dropping, and the New Iraqi

Dinar has been stable for the three months since its introduction.

This progress has not come without great cost and sacrifice.

Thousands of American families have lost irreplaceable time with their

loved ones as they serve the cause of freedom in Iraq. Some American

heroes have not and will not return home. We mourn their loss. For

those who served, a grateful Nation must ensure those returning get

world class healthcare and the compensation to which they are entitled.

After June 30th, other milestones will be marked. Democratically held

elections will be conducted in January 2005 to create a National

Assembly. This representative body will craft a permanent constitution

to strengthen and replace the transitional administrative law (TAL).

The Iraqi people will then vote up or down in a national referendum for

or against their own constitution. By the end of 2005, if all goes

according to plan, the first democratically elected Iraqi government in

history will take office.

President Bush put it very succinctly during his speech before the

Army War College, when he said: ``The rise of a free and self-governing

Iraq will deny terrorists a base of operation, discredit their narrow

ideology, and give momentum to reformers across the region. This will

be a decisive blow to terrorism at the heart of its power, and a

victory for the security of America and the civilized world.''

The people in Iraq--like people everywhere--want to live free. And

among the many reasons why democracy has a chance to succeed in Iraq--

although success is not assured--is because the United States is not in

Iraq as an imperial power. We do not seek to permanently occupy Iraq.

Far from it. Our mission is clear: to liberate Iraq from tyranny. Thus,

it is absolutely at the heart of America's interests to see Iraq's new

sovereign government succeed in establishing law and order in a just

and democratic manner.

Iraqis are a justifiably proud people with an ancient and rich

history and culture. Like many other people, they are patriotic and do

not like to see their country occupied by any foreign power, no matter

how ostensibly helpful they try to be. The Germans and Japanese were

undoubtedly relieved when the Allies formally returned sovereignty to

their people.

Although U.S. troops remained in each country in large numbers for

decades, the former Axis nations truly thrived only after it became

clear to the great majority of people that they faced a choice: they

could either roll up their sleeves and get to work rebuilding their

war-torn nation, or they could look backwards and remain in a miserable

state.

Today, Iraqis essentially face the same choice. If they keep focused

on the task at hand--rebuilding their shattered country's

infrastructure and creating jobs--they too can create an economic boom

similar to that experienced by Japan and Germany.

We must not forget that rebuilding Germany, Japan, Italy after World

War II was not easy. Democratic traditions take time to set roots.

Italy's political system was not stable throughout almost the entirety

of the Cold War. Japan essentially had one-party rule until recently.

All three nations faced many upheavals and setbacks along the way. But

like the three defeated Axis powers, Iraq will also have the benefit of

extensive international economic and financial assistance in

rebuilding.

Unlike an imperial power, when a nation is militarily liberated by

the United States, we are willing to put our resources, technologies

and willpower to work for democracy.

Our enemies are well aware that the return of real and meaningful

sovereignty to Iraqis will undercut one of their chief recruiting

justifications--the occupation. That is why we have seen a decrease in

terrorist attacks against U.S. and Coalition troops, and more of a

focus against foreign contractor personnel and Iraqis involved in their

new government.

The terrorists are increasingly targeting new regime officials,

police recruiting stations, and personnel involved in development

programs. The terrorists and insurgents understand--perhaps better than

the U.S. news media--that if the new Interim Iraqi Government headed by

Prime Minister Ayad Allawi and President Sheikh Ghazi Al-Yawar

succeeds, the terrorists will be defeated.

If Iraqis establish enough basic security to allow for the systematic

rebuilding of Iraq's destroyed infrastructure, and commerce and

prosperity return to Iraq, the moral swamps from which disaffected

young Iraqi men are recruited by insurgents, will dry up. And as

democratic traditions and tolerance begin to take root, and the social

and economic status of women are uplifted, the appeal of radical

misinterpretations of Islam will also diminish.

It is not an accident that Wahabbism and other forms of militant

Islam flourish in conditions of chaos, in failed states, in places of

misery and suffering, and in communities where women are seen as less

than second class citizens. Our task in Iraq is to make sure these

conditions never return, and are instead replaced by prosperity,

freedom, and tolerance.

When, over time, democracy takes hold in Iraq, other Muslims

throughout the region will be able to use the experience of Iraq to

refute the arguments of repressive regimes in the Muslim world who

justify their corrupt and brutal regimes by saying that there is no

other way.

But there is another way. A better way. We need to stick by the side

of those brave Iraqis who want to create a free, open and democratic

society in Iraq and are willing to risk their lives in order to do it.