Mr. Speaker, for purposes of debate only, I yield the

customary 30 minutes to my friend, the gentleman from Fort Lauderdale

(Mr. Hastings) pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume.

During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the

purposes of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, 1 year ago, our brave servicemen and -women began a

military operation that brought freedom for tens of millions, toppled

one of the most despicable regimes in the history of the world, and

strengthened the national security for the American people.

Operation Iraqi Freedom was, and continues to be, a military success

of the highest order. Within 4 weeks from the start of operations on

March 19 of last year, the U.S. military had won unqualified victory.

Saddam Hussein and his Baathist regime could no longer terrorize the

Iraqi people who were finally free to act, do and say as they pleased

for the first time in decades.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that Saddam Hussein endangered

world security. He posed a threat to his people, his region and the

international community. Trusting the intentions of a man who started

two wars, gassed his own people, and supported international terrorism

would have been grossly irresponsible.

As weapons inspector David Kay has said, we know Saddam Hussein

wanted weapons of mass destruction, we know he was attempting to

resuscitate his illicit programs, and we know with certainty who he

viewed his greatest enemy to be.

In a world where Iran can buy its way to a nuclear program with

assistance from Pakistan's top nuclear scientist, combined with

Saddam's access to illicit oil revenue, the fact that weapons of mass

destruction have not yet been found in Iraq is hardly proof that Saddam

Hussein did not want to severely hurt our country. Moreover, American

national security has been solidified by the military action that was

undertaken last year.

Mr. Speaker, does anyone really believe that Iran would be

cooperating with international nuclear inspectors today if we had not

launched this military operation? Does anyone really believe that North

Korea would be engaged in six-party talks over the future of their

nuclear program if the United States had not deposed Saddam Hussein?

Does anyone really believe that Muammar Qaddafi, as recalcitrant in his

defiance to the international community as ever a dictator has been,

would have willingly come to the United States and Britain and declared

that he wanted to end his illicit weapons programs had the American

military not marched into Baghdad?

Mr. Speaker, Operation Iraqi Freedom sent an unmistakable signal to

the rest of the world's tyrannical leaders: Either play by the rules or

face the consequences.

Now, the events of September 11 taught us that we cannot allow

threats to arrive on our shores before we combat them. If other Nations

wish to keep their head in the sand about the dangers of proliferation

and terrorism, that is their prerogative, but we cannot and could not

afford to take that chance.

To those who complain of the cost of war and its aftermath, I simply

will note that estimates of the cost of containing Saddam and his

successors, as some have argued we should have done, are upwards of six

times the dollar amount we have spent on war and reconstruction thus

far, and significantly higher in terms of human lives lost.

Because of the heroic action of our military, the Iraqi threat has

been mitigated efficiently and a new dawn has begun for the people of

Iraq.

Earlier this month, Iraqi leaders signed the transitional

administrative law into effect. It establishes an Iraqi law, a bill of

fundamental human rights and paves the way for Iraqi democracy.

Perhaps more important than the signing of the law itself, was the

agreement of Suni, Shiite, and Kurdish leaders to sign the document.

While differences amongst them remain, and the road ahead will be

difficult, it is clear they are acting with the best interests of the

new Iraq and its people firmly in mind.

I should say our colleague, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. Pryce) is

going to, in her remarks today, tell a

very moving story about the fact that these very, very disparate groups

have been able to come together sharing this pursued goal.

The Iraqi people themselves are clearly enjoying their newfound

freedoms under the transitional government. Poll results released just

yesterday demonstrate that not only do a significant majority of Iraqis

feel they are much better off than they were under Saddam Hussein's

reign, but the extremely high level of participation in the poll

demonstrates their desire to exercise their right to speak their minds,

something that was unthinkable under the tyranny of Saddam Hussein.

Such progress has only been possible because of the tireless

commitment of our Armed Forces and those of the 34 nations assisting us

to provide security on the ground in Iraq.

It is dangerous territory; and the forces of evil, whether they be

Ba'athist remnants or infiltrated al-Qaeda sympathizers, are a constant

threat. In the past year, we have lost over 550 of our best and

brightest Americans, with another 3,190 wounded. That number, as it is

in any conflict, is too high. Without question, we owe the soldiers we

have lost, the soldiers who remain, and their families, an enormous

debt of gratitude. Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this resolution

marking this first anniversary is designed to do. If there is any

solace, it is knowing that because of their actions, America and the

world are safer places today with Saddam Hussein's regime dismantled.

Because of our military, the people of Iraq have a bright future,

where Sunni, Shiite, and Kurd alike can dream of being treated equally,

of electing their representatives, of owning a prosperous business, and

being free to say, worship, and read what they want.

Mr. Speaker, it would be all too easy for the United States to leave

Iraq now and let the Iraqi people fend for themselves. Avoiding

conflict is the path of least resistance and is always politically

expedient. But unlike previous conflict, terrorism cannot be contained.

It has no boundaries. It has no rules. One day it strikes Baghdad, the

next Madrid. The only recipe for success in this war is our resolve to

defeat threats where we see them and promote democracy where we can.

Mr. Speaker, true success in the war on terror is taking place right

now on the ground in Baghdad and Kabul. By supporting, securing, and

strengthening the democratic governments of Iraq and Afghanistan, we

are promoting greater equality within those countries as well as

providing forums for those who feel disaffected to air they grievances

without picking up arms. As open and transparent governments spread

throughout the world, the precursor ingredients for terrorism, anger,

and fanaticism will dissipate. That will be the continuing legacy of

Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this rule and the underlying

resolution, which not only affirms the actions that the United States

undertook a year ago, but provides every Member of this body the

opportunity to reaffirm their own personal commitment to winning the

war against terrorism, our commitment to democracy in Iraq, and, most

important, to our troops in the field.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that this resolution will enjoy strong

bipartisan support. That is our goal. I also hope, Mr. Speaker, that as

soon as we pass this resolution that we will immediately have it

translated in Arabic so that Saddam Hussein can read it in his cell and

be reminded constantly of what we and the victims are regularly

reminded of. Thanks to our military, Mr. Speaker, Saddam Hussein does

have time to read that.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute. I want to engage my

colleague from Missouri in a colloquy.

There is no Member of this House who is more highly regarded in the

area of national security than our friend, the gentleman from Missouri

(Mr. Skelton). I am privileged to be a native of the Show Me State, and

he has done us all very proud.

I know at the end of the day he will want to support this resolution,

Mr. Speaker, because this resolution does exactly, exactly what my

friend just stated in his closing remarks: recognizing our troops.

Now, we had no intention of offending anyone in drafting the

resolution. In fact, we thought it was so noncontroversial that it

would be an appropriate thing to move it forward.

Reclaiming my time, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that I

completely understand that he would like to have had input; and that is

one of the reasons we, in fact, did provide an opportunity, which is

unusual, in consideration of this rule, for a motion to recommit for

Members of the minority, if in fact that was the case.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Atlanta, Georgia

(Mr. Linder), my very good friend and the chairman of the Subcommittee

on Technology and the House of the Committee on Rules.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

It is true that the United States of America has had a bipartisan

foreign policy. This resolution is not about foreign policy. This

resolution is not about foreign policy, this is a resolution that is

simply designed to congratulate our troops. I do not understand why

there is any controversy on it. As I said earlier and as I said in the

Committee on Rules last night, we are sorry if anyone was offended over

the fact that Members of the minority were not offered a chance to have

input. I said to a number of my colleagues, that is one of the reasons

that we have in fact made in order a motion to recommit that will allow

the minority at the end of the bill an opportunity to cast a vote on

that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms.

Pryce) who has done a phenomenal job of focusing on the rights of

women. She chairs our Republican Conference and the Subcommittee on

Legislative and Budget Process Reform for the Committee on Rules.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to simply say that again, we did not have a

goal of offending Members on this. This is not about foreign policy,

this is about commending our troops.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution is 2 1/2 pages long, okay. I am going

to share with our colleagues the resolved clause.

That is what this resolution is all about.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from

North Carolina (Mrs. Myrick), the very distinguished Chair of the

Republican Study Committee.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say that my friend from

California is one of the greatest patriots in this institution. I hold

him in the highest regard. I believe very strongly in the need for us

to pursue a bipartisan foreign policy. Let me just say that, again, we

had no intention of offending anyone in the crafting of this

resolution, and it should be a nonpartisan resolution itself. At the

end of the day because we found that controversy came forward in the

Committee on Rules last night beyond the request that was made by

Chairman Hyde, we did in fact offer a motion to recommit for members of

the minority.

But I do believe again that this resolution is designed to do nothing

more than commend the troops and the people of Iraq. That is what it is

designed to do. It has nothing to do with our foreign policy. This here

marks the first anniversary of this very, very successful effort. I

think that what we are trying to do here is, in a bipartisan way,

acknowledges that.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield 3 minutes to my very good friend

from Miami, Florida (Mr. Lincoln Diaz-Balart), an able member of the

Committee on Rules.