Mr. Speaker, I thank the Speaker for the opportunity to

address the House this evening, really by way of reporting on a

congressional delegation trip that I had the privilege of leading at

the very turn of this month, the very last days of August, the very

first days of September.

Our journey took us on a diplomatic mission through Egypt. We met

with military commanders at Central Command in Qatar. But clearly the

most memorable and meaningful time of our trip, which included the

gentleman from Texas (Mr. Hensarling), who we will hear from in a few

moments, and three of our Democratic colleagues, the gentleman from

Tennessee (Mr. Davis), the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Case), and the

gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. McIntyre), it took us for two full

days into Iraq.

I rise tonight anxious to hear my colleagues' reflections on this

trip and trips that they have taken as the gentleman from Iowa (Mr.

King) will join us. But I rise today to make a very simple assertion,

that from what I saw on the ground, flying into Baghdad on C-130s,

flying around to outpost bases far outside the Green Zone in Baghdad,

far outside the safety net of the center of our operations in Iraq,

what I herald from the soldiers, not just in official meetings but in

informal interactions and what I heard from our commanders was a simple

message: We are winning the war in Iraq.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that that is a very different message than most

of the American people, some of whom may be looking in tonight, are

getting from national television and from the newsprint.

The headlines today were resplendent with over 100 killed in a series

of car bombs and suicide attacks in Iraq; but let me say emphatically

again, from our meetings with General Abizaid at CENTCOM, to General

Petraeus in Baghdad, our meetings with members of the 3rd Infantry

Division and A Company of the 138th Signal Battalion from Indiana in

Ramadi, I heard it again and again: we are winning the war in Iraq.

That is not a slogan. It is an objective fact, based on a few simple

observations, because as many who are strenuous critics of the war

would assert, we have endured casualties, the precise number still less

than 2,000, but every single loss, including the 10 heroes from my

congressional district, is grievous to every single family. I will not

for a moment trivialize a single American loss; but as we heard from

one soldier after another, some with four stars, some with one, some

with

corporal bars sitting on top of amphibious assault vehicles in Ramadi,

as I was with Lance Corporal Ty Cotton, but soldiers understand that

you do not define victory in war by the absence of casualties.

When the U.S. Marines went ashore in Okinawa in 1945, April, we lost

10,000 soldiers in that military engagement and we won. We won the

battle on Okinawa. It remains one of the great military victories in

American history, because as we lost 10,000 American soldiers, the

Japanese lost 200,000 soldiers in the same engagement.

Let us begin there in the definition of victory in Iraq. While we

have lost somewhere shy of 2,000 soldiers in 4 years of fighting, and

today we have 140,000-some-odd soldiers within Iraq, according to

information we received, enemy casualties run from 20 to 30 to one

American casualty; and more compellingly to me as we were informed, the

number of Iraqi military personnel fighting on our side in uniform

compared to our casualties is three to one. Three Iraqis in uniform,

fighting for their own freedom, have died for every American fighting

for their freedom in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Beginning with that large statistic, Mr. Speaker, it is undeniable:

we are winning the war in Iraq. As I will discuss later, literally

hours before the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Hensarling) and I and our

colleagues touched down at the landing zone at the military base at

Balad, there had been a mortar attack, a pretty typical engagement with

the enemy, as near as was represented to us.

Two mortars were fired into the American base. They were tracked

through extraordinary technology and professionalism from literally

moments after they were fired, several thousand yards from the base.

The incoming mortars were determined to be landing in an area where

they did not threaten a significant amount of American military

personnel. They did destroy two trucks, I believe, both of which were

still on fire as we were landing on the base; but when we went into the

command center at the Balad Air Base and saw the full report on that

engagement, we learned that within 3 minutes of the launch of the

mortars, American military personnel had identified where the mortars

were fired.

Within minutes after that, American surveillance drones, known as

Predators, flying overhead were able to surveil and identify up to 13

different insurgents who were making egress from the site where they

had launched the mortar; and within 12 minutes from the time of the

launch, all 13 of those insurgents were killed in a Hellfire missile

attack on their location.

The intelligence, the military precision, no American casualties, 13

Iraqi casualties. We are winning the war in Iraq.

As we sat with General John Abizaid at Central Command in Qatar,

pictured here in this photograph, we had a very intense and intimate

hour with the four star general at Central Command; and before I yield

to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Hensarling), my colleague, I want to

share with my colleagues, without compromising any confidence, a

conversation that I had with the general, which basically was derived

from a recent stop that I made at the American Legion Hall in Selma,

Indiana.

Mr. Speaker, Selma, Indiana, probably has the population of this

House of Representatives when it is filled, maybe 500, 600 people. I

popped into the Legion Hall about a week before I went to visit Iraq. I

walked into the Legion Hall, and there were several guys, a few of them

bellied up to the bar, a few more sitting around tables and chairs and

playing cards; and as I said to General Abizaid, the guys at the Legion

in Selma, Indiana, were concerned about what they were seeing on

television. They wanted to know what is going on, did the soldiers over

there have a cause, are we in this for the right reasons. I took by

their meaning how are we doing in Iraq.

I told them I was leaving in about a week and I called the question

and I had asked the brass and the regular soldiers. So I asked General

Abizaid that very question. I said, General, what do I tell the guys in

the Legion Hall in Selma, Indiana? Four Star General John Abizaid said

in words that still ring in my ears, sitting at this table, he turned

and looked at me, me here, him there, in his private office and he

said, Congressman, you tell them we are winning the war in Iraq.

Then he explained it. He talked about that ratio of, yes, there are

Americans that are dying, but 20 to 30 enemy insurgent soldiers are

dying for every American that has fallen. Then he went on to point out

that at no time in 4 years of fighting have we ever lost a military

engagement to this enemy, never. Every time the enemy has engaged our

forces, we have defeated them and defeated them summarily.

Another statistic that General Abizaid shared with me was the simple

statement that we have never lost a full platoon in a military

engagement with the enemy in this theater of combat.

He conceded that being a combat soldier, being a military man,

knowing the ruthless nature of the perhaps even 10,000 insurgents that

we are dealing with in Iraq, that he had assumed that maybe at this

point they would have figured out how to launch and ambush, as they had

done many, many times and maybe catch us unawares.

The Confederate Army caught the Union Army at Shiloh completely

unawares. In war, people make mistakes, people end up exposed. The

general basically said, in 4 years of fighting, I would have thought

that they would have figured out a way to defeat a full platoon, but

they have never done it. Every time they have engaged our forces, we

have defeated the enemy.

He went on to say that the answer here is not entirely military; but,

rather, that as we went out to Camp Caldwell along the Iranian border,

as we went up to Balad, as we went out to Ramadi, we saw these are

soldiers that are not only engaging the enemy successfully and not only

defeating the enemy in military engagements, one after another, with

professionalism and courage and precision, but they are also training

Iraqi soldiers.

These are the two hands. The American soldier in Iraq today is doing

the work of defeating the enemy, and at the same time, many of the same

personnel are also training Iraqis to provide their own defense, and

the statistics are rather overwhelming and impressive.

In the last 12 months, we have stood up in uniform over 100,000 Iraqi

soldiers for the defense of their own country. Literally, 100

battalions have been stood up, a little bit more than 100 battalions,

but roughly 100,000. As the general told us and the men on the ground

told us who are training these soldiers, they are on track to stand up

another 100,000 Iraqis within 12 months, Iraqis who would be able to

take over their own security of their nation, both internal and

ultimately external security.

Of the 100,000 Iraqis, roughly 30,000 of those are deploying every

day with American soldiers. One full battalion, we were told, is fully

independent and has to do with old tribal loyalties, and they can

handle themselves and we let them handle themselves; but the balance of

some nearly 29 battalions of nearly 1,000 men each are deploying either

on point as we did along the Syrian border last week when literally

Iraqi military personnel led the charge, defeating insurgents and

killing insurgents along the Syrian border, or they are going right

alongside with us.

So for those who want to minimize that, it is an extraordinary thing.

I will never forget it was Labor Day, the day that we were at the

military base at Camp Caldwell near the Iranian border. So, of course,

it is a military base, there was a Labor Day picnic going on. As the

gentleman from Texas (Mr. Hensarling) and the gentleman from Hawaii

(Mr. Case) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. Davis), who had an

awful lot of Tennessee Volunteers there, National Guard from Tennessee,

urged us, we went to the Labor Day picnic. What a sight it was to see

the American military personnel letting off a little steam, of course

playing blue grass music; but the most awesome thing was walking on to

a volleyball court and half of the people playing volleyball in T-

shirts and shorts were Iraqis. Here I am at a Labor Day picnic at a

military installation, along the Iraq-Iran border, and half the people

playing volleyball with the Americans were Iraqis, the people that we

were training.

In fact, we learned there at Camp Caldwell that in a matter of 3 to 6

months, when the Tennessee Volunteers, the National Guard, head back to

Tennessee, they are not going to be replaced by American military

personnel. They are going to be replaced by Iraqis, which is a

statement of success. It affirms we are winning the war in Iraq. We are

standing up an army, 100,000 now, and 12 months, 200,000 Iraqis in

uniform. We are defeating the enemy. We have never lost a platoon or a

military engagement.

I say, Mr. Speaker, with great respect to my colleagues and anyone

else listening in, we are winning the war in Iraq; and it is time the

American people began to hear that and hear that consistently. We are

winning the peace.

As we prepare, we met with Prime Minister Jafari, we met with the

ministers of interior and defense. October 15, the people of Iraq will

vote to ratify, and it is my fondest hope and prayer that they will

ratify, a constitution of their own making. This standing up of a

legitimate government in Iraq, the standing up of an independent army

of Iraqis in Iraq, and ultimately, the drawing down of American troops

as Iraqis take responsibility for their political and security future

is in the cards. It is happening. I know it is not making it on the

evening news, Mr. Speaker; but I have seen it with my own eyes. I have

heard it from our soldiers, not a one of which does not believe in the

mission.

I will yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Hensarling) with this

final thought. We must have talked to thousands of soldiers in the

field, and I say that with absolute sincerity. We spoke to them in

official meetings. We spoke to them on C-130s flying into the country.

We talked to soldiers who knew where we were and who we were and

soldiers who did not know who we were and knew that we would never see

them again. I did not meet a single soldier anywhere in Iraq in the

uniform of the United States of America who did not believe in this

mission.

Every single soldier with whom I spoke said variations of the theme:

we need to be here, sir; everything I have seen, we are doing what

needs to be done; we have got to stop these guys right here.

We are winning the war in Iraq because of that kind of courage, that

kind of determination. So allowing for my passion on this point, I

yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Hensarling), a colleague who

journeyed with us on this trip; and if I may say without embarrassing

him, at a time when his own family was dealing with the tragic

circumstances around Katrina, his own father-in-law, grandfather of his

children, out of communication in New Orleans, but he was still willing

to go into harm's way to be among the soldiers, and I commend him. I

commend his wife, Melissa, for their dedication to our country.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his powerful

reflections on an extraordinary trip.

Before I yield to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. King), who led his own

delegation in August to Operation Iraqi Freedom, I wanted to reflect

for just a few minutes, Mr. Speaker, on a few of the soldiers I met

from Indiana, the kind of people the gentleman from Texas (Mr.

Hensarling) was just talking about.

In fact, a very detailed version of this appears on my Web site,

MikePence.House.gov on our Web log, or blog as it has come to be known.

I literally sat down on the airplane flying back from Iraq and typed up

my reflections and remembrances while they were still fresh, and I want

to excerpt them for just a second, if I can.

This first photograph is my conversations with Sergeant Matt Wright,

an extraordinary young man from Muncie, Indiana, and part of A Company

of the 138th Signal Battalion stationed in Ramadi. To speak about the

kind of dedication that my colleague just reflected on, as I talked to

Sergeant Wright, he said, with the same kind of smile you see in this

photograph, he said, ``Yes, sir, it is good to have you here. Yesterday

was supposed to be my wedding day.'' And I said, ``Did you put it

off?'' He said, ``No, sir. We moved it up 9 months so we could be

married a couple of months before I deployed for 18 months to serve my

country in Iraq.'' I mean, here was a man's dedication to his beautiful

wife and his dedication to his country on full display. Sergeant Matt

Wright.

We began making our way to the mess hall that evening, Mr. Speaker,

in Ramadi. And Ramadi is principally the location of an enormous

division of Marines who engage every night in the very dangerous

patrols of this provincial capital of the west, of Iraq. In fact, many

of the military commanders with whom we spoke said, even more than

Baghdad, in the months ahead as we make that steady, to use my

colleague's term, sometimes halting progress towards democracy and

stability, much of the future fighting will take place in Ramadi, and

it will be done by these brave Marines.

So we stopped on our way to the mess hall, and these five politicians

started reaching up and shaking hands on these enormous amphibious

vehicles, and suddenly I heard a voice say, Are you not going to say

hello to the only Hoosiers here?

I stopped and looked up and saw this bright, freckled red head, a

huge, strapping Marine named Ty Cotton from Anderson, Indiana. Ty

leaned down and helped me climb up on that vehicle where we had a

chance to visit for just a few minutes. As I talked to Ty about his

mom, Marla, back in Anderson, I promised to look in on her and give her

a report on how well he looked. We heard the commander in the

background yell, 5 minutes.

I asked if there was anything we could do, if he had everything that

he needed. And he said shyly, Sir, we have everything we need. I am

with a great unit. Then I heard a shout, 2 minutes.

As I started to move toward the edge, I said, Ty, I want you to know

the people back in Anderson are praying for you, and he looked at me

with that shy smile, and he said, Glad to do it, sir.

We made our way to the mess hall to meet with the balance of the 138

Signal Battalion. I do not know what I expected when we went there. I

sure did not expect to see this bright, good-looking group of men and

women, faces shining like the morning, morale high, proud to be where

they are, even though they are 8,000 miles away from their families. I

sure did not expect to hear the optimism in their voices. One of the

soldiers said it got way better in

Ramadi in the last year. To hear soldiers say it has got way better,

the people on the ground living it, was very encouraging to me.

I was profoundly moved when one soldier after another asked about the

families and communities affected by Hurricane Katrina. These soldiers

are 8,000 miles away from their families, moms and dads, wives and

kids, in 110 degree heat, and they are asking about New Orleans. They

are Americans. They are an extraordinary lot.

As our Black Hawk helicopter lifted off from Ramadi, I watched the

front lines on the war on terror, and I felt humbled by the men and

women of the 138th that you see in this picture; and I felt more

confident than ever in the justness of our cause and the war against

terror and the belief it is vital to provide these men and women the

resources to succeed. That begins by understanding that they are

winning the war now, based on their professionalism, their commitment,

their courage and the faith I encouraged in them, faith in God, faith

in the country, and I say again, their faith in this mission.

I am going to go home this weekend and spend time with people at

home, but I know the most bone-jarring thing that I have said to my

constituents and colleagues, in two 20-plus hour days in Iraq, I did

not meet a soldier who did not believe in the mission. General Mark

O'Neill of the 3rd ID, I looked at him and said we appreciate your

leadership. He said to me, Sir, it is a privilege to be here, but we

have to stop these guys right here.

General Abizaid said to us, I think the most unreported story in

America is how dangerous these guys are. If they get hold of this

country the way they want to and become a petroleum power, these guys

are the Nazis from the 1920s.

To understand that in this environment, as tough as it is, these

soldiers are winning the war in Iraq. They are winning it because we

have never lost a military tactical engagement. We have never so much

as lost a platoon. They are winning it because we have stood up 100,000

Iraqis in uniform in the last 12 months and are on track to stand up

another 100,000 in the next 12. And they are winning it because

democracy is steadily advancing in a nation conditioned by thousands of

years of authoritarianism, but it is advancing nonetheless with a

constitutional referendum around the corner. We are winning the war in

Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr.

King), who has been a tireless advocate of our soldiers in the field in

Iraq and Afghanistan. He has just returned from leading his own

delegation there, and I thought it altogether fitting that he and other

colleagues associated with his travels might seize the opportunity of

this Special Order to reinforce our firsthand account of what is really

happening in Iraq, because what is happening is we are winning in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman for

his tireless efforts to see firsthand. This is a congressman from Iowa

who, when there are controversies in the Federal courts, is on the

steps of the courthouse. I know for a fact this weekend that he was in

a Black Hawk helicopter flying over New Orleans and dining and supping

with the people that are dealing with Hurricane Katrina. For him to be

here tonight to add this critical, important dimension, as the

gentleman from Texas (Mr. Hensarling), whom I will yield to in a

moment, and I were there focusing on the security in the Sunni

Triangle, for him to come here and add to the record tonight that in

realtime in the last several weeks the investment the American people

are making in reconstructing this country is working. It is having its

good effect. An Iraqi chamber of commerce is not something we are

seeing on the CBS Evening News, but it is happening; and I am grateful

to the gentleman from Iowa for bringing that perspective to bear and

just for being who he is.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Hensarling) for

any closing remarks he might have.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman for

his comments.

I cannot add to that closing, but will simply repeat, Mr. Speaker, we

are winning the war in Iraq. And, Mr. Speaker, to anyone who is

listening in tonight to hear the passion of the gentleman from Texas

(Mr. Hensarling), to hear the progress on the ground on civil society

that the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. King) described and to hear about

these soldiers and our effectiveness, we have never lost a military

engagement in 4 years with this enemy. We have never lost so much as a

platoon. We are taking the enemy down at a rate of 30 to one that they

are taking down our military personnel. That all spells victory. We are

winning in Iraq.

But let me leave with one image. As we flew over Baghdad and over

Ramadi, 150 feet off the deck, Black Hawk helicopters flanked by Apache

helicopters, really scary-looking aircraft, I lost count of the number

of men and women and little boys and little girls running from their

homes and waving at our helicopter as we sped by.

And then what broke my heart was to see the helmeted soldier take one

hand off that enormous 50 caliber machine gun and extend a gloved hand

hurriedly out of the helicopter to wave back to those children and men

and women. They were running towards the American helicopters. They

were waving at the American soldier.

This was not a put-up job for some politicians flying through

Baghdad. It was hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people in Baghdad

and Balad and Ramadi throughout the Sunni Triangle who were giving the

thumbs up in a wave of friendship to their liberators, to the people

who are fighting and sacrificing and succeeding in bringing them

freedom and stability, which they so richly deserve.

With that I thank the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. King) and the

gentleman from Texas (Mr. Hensarling) for joining me tonight. And I

close with the thought we are winning the war in Iraq. Never doubt

that.