Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and

I especially thank him for his leadership in this body. As the chairman

of the Republican Study Committee, the largest caucus in Congress, the

gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Pence), my colleague, his leadership is

second to none in this institution.

I am happy to call him my leader in the Republican Study Committee

and to call him my friend. I was very grateful, Mr. Speaker, that he

would invite me to join him on this trip over to Iraq.

It was very important for me, Mr. Speaker, that I travel over to

Iraq. I thought it was important for a couple of reasons.

Number one, I thought it was very important to say ``thank you'' in

person to the brave men and women who don our Nation's uniform and put

themselves in harm's way so that we can live in a safer and more secure

America. It was very important, I think, that these people hear in

person, face to face, where they are sitting and fighting the battle

for freedom and security, that they hear from us in person the Nation's

gratitude for what they do.

I know it has been said before, but I do not know where our Nation

finds such brave men and women to go and do this. It is so heartwarming

that we in America have an all-volunteer military that produces such

great men and women. So I wanted to thank these people in person.

Second of all, Mr. Speaker, as a Member of the United States Congress

who has supported these troops in the field, we all know here in this

institution that we are privy to a lot of briefings by three- and four-

star generals. It is not that often, however, that we can get briefings

from three- and four-stripe sergeants, those who are truly on the front

lines of this effort; and I thought it was very important that I speak

to these men and women as well.

I want to echo what my colleague had to say, and that is that we are

winning this effort. That is not to deny the reality of what we see on

the news every night and, as my colleague said, not to trivialize it,

because the cost of this war is incredible. It is a terribly costly war

in terms of blood and in terms of money. There is no denying that

reality.

But in our living rooms back home, Mr. Speaker, and I come from

Dallas, Texas, there is another reality that somehow never makes the 6

o'clock news, nor does it ever make the front page of my daily

newspaper.

For example, no television station has ever shown up at my home in

East Dallas at 8:30 p.m. to film either my wife or myself tucking our

two children into bed in a safer, more secure America. No film crew has

ever come to film that.

In my home of Dallas, no film crew has ever gone to the Northpark

Shopping Mall and reported, ``Today there was no suicide bomber at

Northpark Mall.'' You will never read that story back home in Dallas,

Texas.

You will never read a newspaper headline saying, ``Today no one

rammed a car filled with explosives through Mesquite Poteet High

School.'' You will never read that story.

Yet I believe that because of what we are doing in fighting this war

against terrorism, because of Operation Iraqi Freedom, we do live in a

safer and more secure America.

Now it is no accident there has not been another attack since 9/11.

That is not to say one could not happen tomorrow, but we will never win

this war playing defense. We will only win this war playing offense.

For the sake of our Nation, for the same of this generation and the

next, we must win this war on terror. And there is no substitute for

actually going to a place, Mr. Speaker, and talking to people and

observing for yourself.

There are a lot of different statistics I could quote in how we are

winning the war on terror, but let me share a few stories, a few

observations I have which really spoke volumes to me.

First of all, traveling around Baghdad in an Army helicopter, all

over Baghdad we saw the rooftops riddled with satellite dishes,

something that was illegal in the regime of Saddam Hussein. The seeds

of freedom of speech that have been planted in that country are

fundamental to growing this democracy, this nascent democracy in this

very vital part of the world. Satellite dishes all over Baghdad with

now multiple sources of information and news that has not been seen in

Baghdad in decades and decades and decades.

Now one of the programs they apparently receive on this satellite

dish, and I did not see it myself but I had a soldier describe it to

me, is a program entitled ``Angry Mothers.'' I guess in America the

show would be part of our reality TV series. But when we watch American

television, we only get the indication that all of the Iraqi people are

either insurgents and terrorists or they cower in their homes. But that

is not the reality that we saw. In this program entitled ``Angry

Mothers,'' apparently when some of the insurgents are captured, they

allow the mothers of those who have been wounded or killed by the

insurgents to confront them. And although I do not know nor do I care

to know how to curse in Arabic, I assume a fair amount of the show has

to be censored.

We never see those pictures of the Iraqi people themselves

confronting the insurgents and confronting them about their evil deeds

and their evil purposes, but, Mr. Speaker, it takes place. It takes

place every day, and it is taking place throughout the Iraqi television

network.

Something else. In going to these various military bases that my

colleague, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Pence), described, whether

it be Camp Caldwell or Camp Liberty, it was described to us that about

6 months

ago there might be two or three mortar attacks every day, and today it

may be two or three a week. Mr. Speaker, it is still war, but it is

progress. It is progress.

We heard a tragic story, and we have seen it in the news before, how

at one of the many recruitment stations, where the Iraqi people will

volunteer to help rebuild their country and be a part of their military

service or to be a part of their police force, how at one of these

recruitment stations the insurgents successfully bombed and killed many

of the recruits. Well, Mr. Speaker, 24 hours later they had that

recruitment station back open, and the exact same number of recruits

showed up again. They knew what had happened. They wanted to be a part

of building the new Iraq. Again, Mr. Speaker, I believe that is

progress. That is helping win this war.

Human intelligence is a very vital aspect of fighting this war. Now,

increasingly, more of the Iraqi people are helping locate the bad guys.

We heard a story about an insurgent who was armed and who broke into a

house. When Iraqi and American troops, working together, managed to go

to this home and knock on the door, this insurgent informed the troops

that he was the cousin from Baghdad of the lady of the house.

Notwithstanding the fact she knew this insurgent had a gun, she said,

``No, sir, he is a terrorist. Take him away.'' That might not have

happened 6 months ago in this country, but it is happening today, Mr.

Speaker. And that is more and more progress in this war against

terrorists.

Mr. Speaker, again let me just go back and talk a little about all

the troops we met and reinforce a point that was made by my colleague

from Indiana. Again, I am just so proud that I had an opportunity to

meet with these brave men and women.

I remember hopping on a C-130 with a corporal out of Las Vegas,

Nevada. He had just come back from 2 weeks of R&R, rest and relaxation,

back home, and he has a family. He is married, and he has children. I

said, ``Corporal, I guess you wish you were still back home.'' And he

said, ``No, sir. Today my unit needs me more than my family.'' Mr.

Speaker, that is the incredible level of commitment that we see.

I remember meeting a young captain from Indiana, the home State of my

colleague who led this delegation. We asked him about what does it mean

to him and his family to be there. He said, very sincerely, ``I hate

being here. I hate being here, but I love my job, and I know how

important it is to my country and my family that I succeed.'' Mr.

Speaker, that is an incredible, incredible level of dedication that we

have.

So some days, Mr. Speaker, it may be three steps forward and two step

backwards. I am not here to say that this is easy work. I am not here

to say that it is going to happen tomorrow. We cannot pick up democracy

through a drive-in window. There is no such thing as McDemocracy. It

takes a long time to develop it. But, Mr. Speaker, it is not

democracies that threaten us, it is these authoritarian, despotic

regimes that harbor terrorists, that train terrorists, that finance

terrorists, and that seek weapons of mass destruction.

I agree with our President, though some do not, but I agree with him

that there are some threats that you must meet before they fully

develop.

Who, looking back at the pages of history, if they had an opportunity

to stop Nazism and Adolf Hitler in 1930 would not have done it? Who

would not have done it? If you had an opportunity to stop what the

Soviet Union did in taking over Eastern Europe and holding it captive

for 50 years, who would not have stopped that?

Well, I think we have an opportunity to stop this terrorist movement

that is taking place and emanating from the Mideast. But we as an

American people have to realize that this is not a sprint, Mr. Speaker,

this is a marathon. It is a marathon.

The cost of cutting and running is too high, because the elements

that would come back and take over in Iraq are the same people who were

part of the Hussein regime. They are the same people who put together

the despotic regime in Afghanistan. These are the people that would

threaten the lives of our fellow countrymen, and that cannot be

tolerated.

So, again, Mr. Speaker, I was very proud to be a part of this

delegation led by the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Pence). I learned so

much. I am so proud of our soldiers, and I wish everybody could see the

day-to-day progress, this kind of sloppy, halting, but inexorable

progress towards democracy that is taking place in Iraq today. Like I

said before, some days it is three steps forward and two steps

backward, but it is progress. We see it, we know it is happening each

and every day, and because of it, I believe ultimately our country will

be more safe and more secure.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will yield back to my friend from Indiana.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to

me.

I just wanted to say that I have been privileged to have a number of

profound moments in my life; but I have to tell the Members, Mr.

Speaker, one of the most profound moments I had was traveling to

Baghdad, traveling to these military installations, meeting with our

brave men and women, and reaching into my wallet, Mr. Speaker, and

pulling out this very small photo of my two children, and looking these

privates and corporals and sergeants in the eye and saying, Thank you.

Thank you for what you do to keep my little 3\1/2\-year-old Melissa and

my almost-2-year-old Travis alive in a safer, more secure America. And

having them pull out photos of their children and having them tell me

how they know how important it is that they fight for their families

many, many thousands of miles away.

That was a profound moment in my life because, Mr. Speaker, I still

do not know if the American people realize what the threat is. There

are terrorists who have sworn publicly. This is not hyperbole. This is

no exaggeration. They have said on the record they want to kill our

children. It is that serious. They want to get their hands on weapons

to attack and annihilate Western Civilization as we know it. This is

their aim.

Mr. Speaker, the insurgents have proven very adept at taking innocent

human life. They are very good at it. But what they have not proven

adept at is halting this occasionally slow, awkward, clumsy, but

inexorable, march towards democracy in Iraq. They have not stopped it,

Mr. Speaker. People show up. They brave bombs and bullets to cast their

ballots. And as we help this democracy flourish in Iraq, not only are

we helping this people in this great and wonderful civilization. More

importantly, we are making America safer and more secure. And that is

what it is all about, Mr. Speaker.