Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Indiana

(Mr. Pence) and count it a privilege to stand on the floor of the

United States Congress with the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Hensarling)

and a number of our colleagues who have come down here to speak out in

defense of our country.

I consider it also a duty to go to the Middle East from time to time

and Iraq in particular and visit with our soldiers over there. The

first time I went was in October 2003. I had some trepidation on my way

over there, not so much concerned about myself because once the

decision is made to go, security is out of my hands and into the hands

of others. But I did not want to be in the way. I did not want to go

over there and have people who had a duty to do look and say, What is

that Member of Congress doing here? Is he here for political reasons?

What is his gig, so to speak.

I had that same feeling when I went to the hospitals at Bethesda and

Walter Reed to visit the wounded soldiers. I asked myself, how are they

going to react? I found out that they are glad to see a face that

cares, a face that is interested in what they are doing and is part of

the team. We are part of the team.

As the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Pence) mentioned, the kind of

spirit, the shining faces that are there, and I wrote down a couple of

things. It shifted my agenda here. One is it is an image that I will

never forget and it was perhaps a year ago. I went to the hospital at

Bethesda and I am scheduled to do that about every quarter to make sure

that I have the feel for the kind of sacrifice that these brave men and

women are making.

I remember walking into a room. There was a Marine captain in the

room who had lost a leg right below the knee. His spirit was good, and

he was strong. I said, what is in your future? And he said, I am going

to stay in the Marine Corps. I am going to get therapy and get this

prosthetic leg and be going, and maybe I cannot get back into combat;

but I am a Marine, and that is my profession.

I asked, Is anything else going to change? He said, Yes, my wife and

I are going to start a family right away. That is the kind of

dedication that is there.

Also, one of the other anecdotes that came to me, when I visited with

the 168th National Guard unit out of Sheldon, Iowa, and fortunately I

was able to break bread in the mess hall with them, a couple of them

had been back home for their 14 days of leave. They were the two with

suntans, and they had gotten their suntan in Iowa. One of them said, I

have been here, serving here for months and I went home for my 14 days

of leave and I started watching television. I thought gracious, things

have gotten a lot worse since when I went on leave. I wonder what it is

going to be like when I go back. He came back, and it was just the same

as when he left.

The question I continually get asked is, It is our duty to fight the

enemy, but why do we have to fight the United States media at the same

time?

The media is always looking for the very worst component of the worst

element they can find so they can get the maximum kind of

sensationalism, but not get that broad perspective of what is going on

over there.

So I went over on the 15th of August and came back on the 20th. The

heat got up to 128 degrees. A piece of information that I received from

those Iowa farm boys, I could never figure out why is it nothing was

growing along the irrigation ditches, why there was water and not a

blade of grass next to it. Those Iowa farmers, they put a thermometer

in the soil, 154 degrees was the soil temperature. We plant corn at 54

degrees. At 154 degrees, it sterilizes the seed and would cook anything

to some of the level that they do in the restaurants in this city.

We went to some unusual places. I asked to go to some of those places

because I think we need to hear some from that area. I believe we were

the first congressional delegation to go down to Basra in the south. We

went in there to that region, and there are two ports where the Tigris

and the Euphrates rivers come together. There are two ports and most of

the water freight that comes in and out of Iraq has to go through

there. We visited a port where there is an Iraqi manager who has been

there for 8 months. He increased production by 400 percent in 8 months.

He did not understand the free enterprise system, however. He did not

understand that gross receipts were not profit; you had to subtract the

expenses. They are missing a little free enterprise culture, and we can

help them with that.

I took a ride in an Iraqi navy patrol boat. Most Americans do not

think about Iraq having a navy. They have an 800-man navy being trained

by the British Royal Navy. We took a flight right around the harbor.

They are proud of what they do.

I was standing there in the headquarters at the command central, the

command headquarters in Basra of all of the provinces in the southern

part of Iraq, and I looked around me and I started to identify where

some of these soldiers were from. I started to look at the flag on

their shoulders. In that group of about 15 or 18 soldiers, I picked out

soldiers from the U.S., Britain, Australia, Iraq, they are part of the

coalition, they are with us, the Netherlands, Romania, and Denmark, all

in that cluster of 15 or 18 soldiers, that many different countries

represented. I hear the criticism, this is not a coalition. Yes, it is.

They are working with each other.

I received a briefing from the British general, General Denton. He

filled us in on the current events and the tactics. It is fairly stable

in the southern part

of the country. One of the things that he said that will stick with me

is, ``I can think of no alternative but optimism.'' I like that phrase.

If you do not believe that Iraq can be a free people, it can be a

stable country, an oil-producing country, a country that starts to

export dates again and the 28 million people there can put their lives

back together again, what is your belief? How would you construct an

Iraq? How would you want to direct that country if you were not an

optimist?

I do not want to be involved in any planning done by anyone other

than by optimists. I cannot have a pessimist there, I cannot even have

one of those realists there because realists, just by definition,

cannot follow a dream. They want to drag down someone else's, but they

cannot follow a dream. Our soldiers are there, and they are following a

dream. The Iraqi people are following a dream. They have their first

grasp at freedom.

We looked at the oil field in the south, the distribution lines, the

platforms where they load the oil out on supertankers. There is a lot

of oil in the south in Basra. The equipment that is there is archaic.

It goes back to the 60s, and it is going to take a lot of capital to

get those oil fields back up to the level they need to be to get the

country back on a fiscal track so they can fund their own construction

and fund their own growth and development of Iraq. They are a long ways

away from that.

The country is far more stable, but they need outside capital from

other countries in the world and from multi-national corporations that

will go in and place a bet on Iraq. It will be a very safe bet because

the oil is there. There is no question the market is there. With $70 a

barrel oil, that makes Iraq look even better from an economic viability

standpoint.

From there we boarded some British helicopters, and the British are

great. Their service is good; they are professional. They give you a

sense of security. They showed us the ports, and then we landed and

walked around and took a look and had a briefing. After we looked at

that, we flew over the wetlands where 800,000 Iraqis lived up until a

little more than a decade ago when some of them rose up against Saddam

Hussein, and he went down and killed about 120,000 of them, drove

between 400,000 and 450,000 out of there, and shut the water off.

That area is twice the size of the Everglades, 8,000 square miles;

and Saddam drove the population from 800,000 down to about 200,000 by

drying them out, starving them out, and just going down and killing

them. That was an impressive thing to see; and it is another place that

has now been recovered, about 40 percent of the 8,000 square miles,

because we have turned the water back into the wetland rather than

diverted it away.

And then from there we went up to another place that a lot of Members

have not gone to, but some have been up there, and that is up to Kirkuk

to the oil fields in the north. And up there, there is so much oil that

some of the oil seeps to the top of the ground. Where there is a pool

of oil in what one might call a sand trap, there is a puddle of oil in

there. It is not a spill. It is natural flowing oil that seeps to the

top of the ground.

And there were oil spills too, as one might expect in a country like

that. A lot of oil in the north that needs a lot of development, too;

and they need to be able to get it to market. And here is one of the

reasons why not. This is a pair of bridges, and these bridges were

blown during the liberation of Iraq. If I have got the bridges right,

and I believe it was this one, there were nine pipelines tied to that

bridge that went underneath there, and, of course, all nine pipelines

got knocked out.

So we put a lot of those pipelines back together, but one of them is

a 40-inch pipeline, a pretty good size pipeline, 40 inches in diameter,

so 3 1/2 feet; and each time we would put that back together, then the

enemy would blow it again. So we brought a contractor in there to take

that 40-inch pipeline and lay it underneath the Tigress River, 25 feet

under the Tigress River, by the way, so it is a little hard for them to

dig down there and blow that up, and that will give it a little more

security. It is one of the pieces of the infrastructure that has been

put together.

After Hurricane Katrina, $18.4 billion almost sounds like loose

change but $18.4 billion across a country of 28 million people the size

of California that had been allowed to depreciate, erode, dilapidate

itself over the last 35 years or more and a country that needs to be

brought back up into the modern era. A country that could not produce

enough electricity so they had to turn the lights off periodically,

even in the cities that got the preferred power. And now we are

distributing power to everybody equally, and the power is up to about

13 hours a day, kind on an average for everybody in Iraq.

But every time we raise the generation up and produce more

electricity, then more Iraqis go out and buy the satellite dish, I say

to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Hensarling), or they go out to buy an

air conditioner. And if I had to choose between the two, I would take

the air conditioner and skip the television, by the way. But when they

buy the air conditioners, the demand for power goes up and up and up,

and we cannot quite catch up with the equation of how much generation

do we have to put in place before it meets the demand. But we are

putting generation in place.

I have here a picture of the mother-of-all-generators. This generator

came across 1,057 kilometers of not always friendly territory. In fact,

a lot of it was hostile territory. It came in several loads, but there

were two big loads. For me, I am a guy who has hauled some heavy loads.

A 400-ton generator, 325-ton turbine, and they came in a caravan with

other equipment that was about a mile long, and this has all been set

up now and up and going. Actually, it is going to be formally put on

line in about January.

But this mother-of-all-generators has been brought all across that

territory, could not have a bullet wound in the generator, came through

safe and sound, the generator, the turbine, and the rest of that. And

they have constructed this together near Kirkuk, and this power will go

to a number of the outlying communities as well as Kirkuk, and it

dramatically kicks up the generation capacity.

So I went to see where the money went that would build the

infrastructure of Iraq. And I saw renovated swamps. I saw sewer plants

and lines that have been constructed. This generation that is here, I

am watching them as they are constructing, not exactly a refinery, but

it is a preliminary process to, I think, take the sulfur out of the oil

that is there. I have watched work around that country, and I have

watched the spirit of the people. And then from Kirkuk, we flew across

in Black Hawks down to Baghdad across that vast open space and arrived

in Baghdad.

We had to push and hurry because I was scheduled to meet with the

Iraq Chamber of Commerce. I did not think about Iraq as having a

chamber of commerce, and they are affiliated with the Americans in a

way; so I believe they call it the American-Iraq Chamber of Commerce in

Baghdad. They asked me if I would give a speech.

Yes, I will do that, but where is my interpreter?

Well, you do not need one because these people all speak English.

And I thought that was kind of a telling thing, and there were, I

think, 56 of them there, somewhere between 55 and 60 Iraqi business

people that are members of the chamber of commerce that want to do

business. They want to get free enterprise going, and they just want to

have a chance. The message that I carried to them was a message that

America is not going to be the economic salvation for Iraq. Iraqis are

going to be the economic salvation for them. They are going to need to

build those traditions of free enterprise. They are going to have to

build the institutions of business that go along with this free

enterprise structure and culture that we have in the United States of

America.

They have got a great start if that many of them can communicate with

the rest of the world through a common form of communication currency

called English. But they have got a lot of cultures to establish. If

the manager of the port city down near Al Basrah does not understand

the equation between gross receipts less expenses equals net income, it

does not mean he is not a good manager. It just means

that there is a blank space in their upbringing, and I want to see the

free enterprise culture established and grow. We can use American

business people over there.

The security part is the part that I have the least amount of advice

for because we have the highest degree of professionals that are there

providing security. Soldier after soldier, when I looked them in the

eye, I came back from that country, my third trip over there, more

confident than ever in the job that they are doing and the security

that is being provided. I believe that because of the National Guard

and our Reservists, added to our active duty personnel, the people that

have more experience than most, that bring their professionalism with

them, I believe that we have fielded a military here of the highest

quality of people ever to go to war, and that is our soldiers that are

over there who are putting their lives on the line.

General Casey said something that I think we need to remember, and

that was, ``The enemy cannot win if the politicians stay in the

fight,'' and I believe that he meant the politicians here on the floor

of Congress, Mr. Speaker. I believe he meant the House and the Senate.

I believe he meant the people who believe, that are setting up

quasiforeign policy, the people that the enemy are listening to. We

need to send a solid message over to them: we stay in the fight here;

the Iraqis stay in the fight there.

As the politicians and the military, we will have 200,000 in uniform

by next spring, and they are leading the battle over there; and

Americans are stepping back. And we have handed over a base now to the

control of the Iraqi troops. Signs are positive. The free enterprise

side is coming along. They will get a constitution ratified. When they

do, they can sign a contract to develop that oil. When they develop

that oil, that money will come into their coffers, and they can develop

their country. That is the formula for success in Iraq.

I appreciate the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Pence) yielding to me,

and I appreciate his leadership on this; and I look forward to the day

that we can celebrate a victory in Iraq.