Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to be here tonight, along

with fellow colleagues and with the chairman of the House Armed

Services Committee, Duncan Hunter, to talk to you about the war in

Iraq.

During my recent visit to Iraq, it was clear to me that our brave

military men and women know what they are doing, why they are doing it,

the progress they are making, and the threat to our world and our way

of life if they fail. They see the big picture: Iraq is a key piece in

a region-wide and worldwide struggle.

What they wanted to know was what were the American people saying and

thinking, and they wanted to know why their stories are not being told,

and why their successes are not being told.

Mr. Speaker, recently there was a New York Times article that

included this quote. It says: ``I kind of predicted this. A third time

just seems like I am pushing my chances.'' But in reality, Mr. Speaker,

that was a much longer quote that I would like for you to see and I

would like for you to hear. What that quote said was: ``Obviously, if

you're reading this, then I have died in Iraq. I kind of predicted

this. That is why I am writing this in November. A third time just

seemed like I am pushing my chances. I don't regret going. Everybody

dies, but few get to do it for something as important as freedom. It

may seem confusing why we are in Iraq. It's not to me. I am here

helping these people so that they can live the way that we live, not

have to worry about tyrants or vicious dictators, to do what they want

to do with their lives. To me, that is why I died. Others have died for

my freedom. Now this is my mark.'' Corporal Jeffrey B. Starr.

We would all like to thank Corporal Starr for his service, to tell

him and his family that America mourns their very great loss, and to

say that he is a true American hero.

We are here tonight to tell his story and to tell the story of the

very brave

men and women who are serving to keep us free. First, I would like to

start by recognizing Congressman Dan Burton from Indiana.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman for

taking his time to join us tonight to talk about true American heroes

and what they are doing. You will find it interesting that today in the

Armed Services Committee, we had a panel of three men, Marines and Army

both, who have served in Iraq. And when they were questioned about

media coverage, they gave a couple of very interesting comments. One

told us he never knew the war was going so poorly until he came home.

Another one told us that the Iraqi press is doing a wonderful job of

reporting what is going on over there, those independent newspapers and

magazines that you have just referenced, now having 100 of them in

Iraq. Service members there feel that the press is only reporting when

bullets are flying and not the progress that they are making.

So I thank the gentleman for being here, and I thank the gentleman

for his comments.

Congressman, I would like to tell you two stories about

the Iraqi people. On my trip, I was quite amazed, flying from Baghdad

to Balad in a black Army helicopter, very low and very fast over

agricultural fields; and the people working the fields were waving at

the helicopter. When we got to Balad, I commented, only to be told they

always wave at us.

The second story was in Arizona this summer I went out for a

congressional meeting. Turned out my cab driver was from Iraq. He has

been here 16 years. Still has family in Iraq. And he goes to Iraq on a

contract working with the Iraqi troops.

When he realized I was a Member of Congress, he stopped the cab,

turned around and said, ``I would like for you to thank the American

people for me for what you have done.'' He said, ``When I go over

there, it is like I am on vacation. There is only a few places where

there are problems.'' He said, ``You people work so hard and so long, I

do not think that you ever sleep, and you do it all for us.''

Congressman, thank you for coming and being with us. I am

sure on your trip that it was just like on mine, I realized immediately

these are people who have chosen to be here. It is an all-volunteer

force. I am sure you also saw, as I did, that many of them volunteered

to go to Iraq and to go back to Iraq; and it is just so impressive, the

commitment that they have given to our Nation and the words of our men

and women just like Corporal Starr.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Tennessee.

And for their willingness to share that that quote was

wrong and to share the real quote, something that personal.

As the gentlewoman was speaking, I thought I need to make

sure that you know that just a few weeks ago in Washington, the Speaker

of the Iraq National Assembly came and spoke to people who were able to

attend that meeting, and it was exactly like the gentlewoman said. He

kept saying to us, there is no other option. And that is exactly what

you have said to us and you have said this is where we are; this is

what we have done. We may go back a step, but we go forward two or

three more. We honor those who have served and died, thereby

remembering that there is no other option. We can only move forward.

You also said very clearly who would have ever thought there would be

a Constitution in Iraq; who would have ever thought there would be a

National Assembly in Iraq. It is a huge success story. I think it is a

miracle. I thank the gentlewoman for being here and sharing this with

us.

Congressman, thank you for that. That was very moving to

hear about your district and their commitment to our great Nation.

I would like to explain this map to you, though. Because if you will

look in the center of the map where it is green, including the Horn of

Africa and up through the Middle East, that is the short-term goal of

the terrorists. This is from their Web site. Is it not an amazing world

we live in that terrorists have Web sites? That is their goal, that

everything colored in in green be controlled by them short term.

If you will look in the far corner over there, that is their 100-year

goal. If you will notice, everything colored in in green is our entire

world. I think it is important for the public to know this is not

Thelma Drake saying this. This is from their Web site and their goal,

and this tells you what those very brave men and women that you have

just spoke so eloquently about, they know this and they know the threat

to our Nation.

I also wanted to share with you a quote from a letter that I brought

with me tonight to talk about dated October 11, 2005, from al-Zawahiri

to al-Zarqawi. The quote is, because you mentioned Vietnam and I think

this is important for us to remember: Things may develop faster than we

imagine. The aftermath of the collapse of American power in Vietnam and

how they ran and left their agents is noteworthy.

So do not think they do not know and they are not watching.

Next, I would like to recognize Congressman Geoff Davis from

Kentucky. I thank him for being here.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that history will name this

generation. And until they do, I have decided I am going to call them

the Freedom Believers, because I think there is no greater gift that we

give to our children and to our grandchildren than freedom. And so I

thank them, and I thank the speaker for the opportunity to be here

tonight.