Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding to me,

and I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. Hunter) for putting

together this opportunity to honor those who serve our Nation in the

war on terror.

I am up here speaking for the people of the 31st Congressional

District of Texas. How does the 31st Congressional District of Texas

have credibility to speak on behalf of these efforts in Iraq and

Afghanistan? I would like to tell you a little bit about our

credibility.

The first American soldier killed in combat in the war on terror is

from Georgetown Texas, which is 5 miles from my home; and every death

in this war is absolutely critical to Americans. So counting numbers,

every number counts. But the 2,000th death also took place, this famous

2,000th death that everybody in the press was just salivating to see

happen, it seemed to me, he was also from the 31st district, Killeen,

Texas. The people of the 31st district, from Stevensville, Texas to

Round Rock, Texas, support our war, support our troops, and support our

efforts in the war on terror.

The people of the 31st district know we were attacked in the most

vicious attack that has ever been done on the homeland in the history

of the United States in our country, and we have retaliated in force

and effectively and done our job. And who has done that job? Our 31st

district's III Corps went over there. Fourth Infantry Division went

over there and captured Saddam Hussein. The First Cavalry Division went

over and ran a perfect election and protected people as they went out

and, as we have heard tonight, exercised their right to vote.

We have committed two full divisions to this war, and the Fourth ID

is on its way back right now as we speak. I have been able to go over

when both my divisions have been over there, and I promised General

Thurmond and the that guys I talked to about 2 months ago, I am coming

back just as quick as I can get over there right after the first of the

year, because these are the finest human beings that have ever taken up

arms on behalf of our country.

For those people to talk about cutting and running, Americans do not

cut and run. You know, this House has a shame on it when they turned on

our soldiers in Vietnam, and I take that position and I am not backing

off of it. The liberal press shamed a great generation of people who

did their duty then and we, cannot afford to allow that to happen again

for political expediency so someone can possibly use the war to gain

political advantage in the United States.

We are at war with evil people who intend to do harm to American

citizens, wherever American citizens live or breathe or walk the

street. We are unsafe with terrorism on the street, we are unsafe in

our Nation and in every other nation on Earth because it is an evil

cancer that can only be taken out by noble men and women who are

willing to stand up on the wall and say we will fight for freedom, not

only the freedom of Americans, but the freedom of the people that they

are intimidating with their terrorism wherever they may appear. And I

am telling you, we have got soldiers that have been willing to do that

and have done the job well.

I remember when I was in Afghanistan, the story I love to tell about

a 20-year-old sitting looking at a screen of a film of a drone that was

broadcasting pictures from the desert. And while we were there, he went

to his commander and said, Sir, there is a bunch of camels crossing out

there in a part where there should not be any camels. And I thought,

how does this kid know there are not supposed to be any camels in this

part of the country? He said, I think there are people underneath those

camels.

Three Blackhawk helicopters launched about 180 miles away. We were

180 miles from this location. And they caught nine Taliban crawling

across the desert under the bellies of camels.

My whole point of that story is: What kind of great, intelligent,

smart kids are we sending over there and they are putting their lives

in harm's way? This was a smart kid, a computer operator running a

drone, able to know the knowledge of the country, to know where our

enemy might be hiding. We have got the best of the absolute best over

there, the same kind of people that you run into when you go to Iraq

and you talk to these kids.

I talked to a 20-year-old African American kid. We were having

supper. He was from my district, and we have got a lot of them from my

district. And I said, ``Son, have you had any hot spots that you have

been in over here?'' And he said, ``Yeah. Yesterday we were in a

convoy. They made the mistake of shooting at us.'' He said, ``They will

not make that mistake again, sir.'' He said, ``When they stand and

fight, they lose.''

Our young men and women are doing a fabulous job, and there is shame

on anyone in this country who turns on these noble people who are

standing up for the freedom of the people in Iraq and Afghanistan and

the freedom of the United States of America. They are heroes.

Today, I am very proud to say that one of the first people in my

district to be wounded, seriously wounded, Allen Babbin, he has

undergone close to 200 surgeries from a round that he took, winning the

Bronze Star for pulling another wounded soldier off a bridge in the

second day in Baghdad. Today, he flew back home; and he is on his way

to full recovery because of the great work of the Army, Navy, and Air

Force in getting him to the right kind of treatment.

Everybody is working the right way in this job, and we bring shame

upon ourselves, and those who would criticize these young men and women

and the job they are doing bring shame upon themselves, and I am sorry

for it.

We in America must remember: If we do not fight tyranny wherever

tyranny exists, we have learned this lesson over and over and over in

American history, and if we do not support those who fight tyranny

wherever tyranny exists, then tyranny will take over that map until

tyranny controls the world. There will not just be no freedom in Iraq

or no freedom in Afghanistan. There will not be any freedom anywhere.

Not even in the cradle of American liberty will there be freedom.

What this is about, Mr. Speaker, is the ability of Americans and

others in this world to live the kind of life that everybody wants to

live, raise their kids, have a job, eat dinner at night without fearing

somebody blowing them up, walk the streets. It is for all the world

that we stand in the gap, not just for Americans, not just for Afghans,

not just for Iraqis or others in the Middle East. It is for the world

that these young men and women stand in the gap.

I am very proud on behalf of the people of the 31st Congressional

District of Texas to tell you that we stand tall on behalf of our

soldiers. We know they are the best of the best, and they will win the

war on terror because it is the right thing to do.

Lastly, we pray God's blessing on each and every one of them and each

and every family that is also courageously allowing their family member

to do the job that has to be done to keep freedom alive and well in

this country. So this is all about us. It is all about the best of the

best. God bless every one of them.