Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to share

a perspective that I think is often lost in the freedoms we enjoy, the

freedom to meet in this Chamber, the freedom to reflect upon the great

decisions that have been made here through the generations, The

decision to enter into a war, to provide freedom and the maintenance of

our union, the decision to free peoples in Europe and ultimately

preserve our security at home.

On December 7, 1941, President Roosevelt stood in this Chamber and

declared that December 7 was a day of infamy. He shared that this

unprovoked attack which moved the United States to war, eventually into

Europe as well. In the Korean War, we stopped Communist aggression. In

Vietnam, the American people responded. During Operation Desert Storm,

the American people responded.

In this Chamber in September of 2001, President Bush responded to an

attack that was not brought about, my friends, by some nebulous global

war on terror. I think it is important that we understand this war is

not about some nebulous terrorist concept. This is about Islamic

extremism that chooses to impose itself on the world. These people who

largely act as agents of states, these non-state actors do not follow

the teachings that they purport. Yet if we look more deeply, we see

that they are seeking to be true to their interpretation of that

religion.

In every generation there is a call upon that generation to defend

the freedoms that have been purchased at such a tremendously high

price. To maintain the union of our country and to free those who were

enslaved cost 600,000 soldiers. In World War II, 444,000 soldiers gave

their lives to provide freedom; and now we are engaged in a great

struggle, a generational struggle that has been imposed upon us.

I think that it is important that we understand that the freedom that

our minority leader had today to say, frankly, entirely inappropriate

things about our national leadership, the freedom that all of us have

to disagree, the freedom that all of us have to offer alternatives, the

freedom that all of us have to protest, the freedom that reporters who

sometimes distort the truth and, in fact, in many cases do not even

report the truth but fabricate it, all comes down to the men and women

who have answered the call to duty.

It is always the same. It is always the minority in the country that

does that. Those who believe that there is something bigger in this

country than individual selfishness and covetousness of the moment,

that there is something worth risking all to protect because of those

who come behind us, because they understand they are part of something

bigger than themselves, bonded to something of greatness.

I want to thank tonight those Marines of the Second Marine

Expeditionary Force, the soldiers of the Third Infantry Division, the

solders of the 101st Infantry Division, of the 173rd Airborne Brigade

in Afghanistan, of the Tennessee and Louisiana National Guards who are

rotating back into the United States, and all of those soldiers who are

moving in and out, the Marines who are moving in and out, our airmen

and sailors who support this effort, because you understand that you

have accepted the call of the generations that is so important that

many people do not realize.

The freedom we enjoy in this Chamber was brought to us by 10 percent

of the population of this country who chose to rebel against tyranny

and stand for a principle that was higher than dignity of the

individual, the rights and freedom of the individual, and that was

purchased not simply in a declaration, but to get to the Constitution

that gave us the government we have today was purchased in a great

price in blood.

I am convinced that if today's cynical media had to cover the

Normandy invasion, the greatest invasion in history that defeated the

greatest tyranny in history up to that point, had it been reported by

today's media, today's cynical media, today's profit-driven media, Mr.

Speaker, I believe we would have lost that war. Because the Nation

would have called for a pullout because there was risk associated with

that, because things did not seem to go well. Because when unforeseen

circumstances that always come up in war, and anybody who has served in

the military, let alone in this Chamber, unexpected things happen.

I find those who have not served who are the great experts on

military history do not really understand what they are talking about.

Rather than commending our soldiers who have adapted to a fluid

situation and the great things that have been done to support them,

they provide criticism of why could that not have been anticipated?

It is simple, my friends. We are fighting an adaptive and motivated

and, frankly, evil enemy that has a religious doctrine that stands and

flies in the face of everything on which this country was founded, on

which the Constitution was based, that respects the rights of the

individual, the dignity of a man, the dignity of a woman to pursue

opportunities in the way in which they define. And when somebody wants

to impose an attack upon this Nation, and one that was planned long

before September 11, and attempts that were made long before September

11, we have no choice but to yield or to respond, and we have

responded.

Comments that have been made by my colleagues on the other side that

talk about casualties, I can speak with some authority on that issue,

having buried some of my friends. I find it interesting that they want

to talk about numbers, which dishonors those who serve. I did not see

any of my colleagues who talk about these numbers standing with me as I

buried a friend of a friend who was killed in Al Qayyim in June over at

Arlington Cemetery. They were back here at PAC fund-raisers and going

to receptions and making pointless statements in this Chamber about

things they know nothing about.

More than that, I would suggest to you that these same people who

want to talk about numbers and these liberal reporters who do not care

about this Nation, who do not care about the price that was paid for

the freedoms that they enjoy, where were you for the last 25 years?

Where were you when 16,000 American soldiers died between 1983 and 1996

in service to this Nation? Where were you when 24,000 American men and

women gave their lives between 1980 and 2004? Your comments, frankly,

are despicable, dishonorable, uninformed, unhistorical, anti-

intellectual and, frankly, un-American. But I respect your freedom to

make those statements, because they were purchased with the blood of

all of those who served.

I would suggest that in this body that the liberal reporters who

watch and our enemies who watch and the soldiers who watch and those

who want to speak against this from their positions of ignorance and

political convenience, who use our soldiers: You learned your lessons

during the Vietnam War. Now you use our soldiers in a dishonorable way

as human shields to advance an idea that stands in contravention to the

freedoms that have been purchased at such a high price.

I ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who have been here

for many years and like to speak with false authority: Where were you

when my friend Ken Maddock was killed from Task Force 160? Where were

you when my classmate from West Point, Mike Scott, died? Where were you

when Lee Border died or Brian Haller died in the 101st Airborne

Division? I saw no requiems in this Chamber. I saw no requiems on

television for them. It was not politically expedient.

But now you disagree with the policy when our Nation is threatened by

extremists, and soldiers and Marines and airmen and sailors have

responded to that call, and you sit here mouthing your empty words.

Casualties are always a great tragedy.

I think the one thing that was most poignant to me as I visited my

old Airborne Unit, I deployed to the Middle East with the task force of

the 1/508th running aviation operations in support of them, and I went

and visited that unit today in Paktika Province in Afghanistan.

A CNN reporter came to one of the forward operating bases. There had

been an attack on that base earlier in their deployment as they were

clearing out the enemies of freedom, and not

simply ending a military operation but bringing order and civil

government and roads and sewers and the fact that the government can be

good and the people can be helped and they can be part of something

bigger than themselves, which is not a tyranny, an ideological tyranny.

That reporter was looking for bad stories and refused to cover the

reenlistment of every soldier in the 1/508 on that forward operating

base who was up for reenlistment. That is a tragedy, and that is

unfortunate.

To me, I think the lesson that we have to ask ourselves is how do we

get around this, how do we avoid this problem. Well, the media is not

going to be helpful to this country because I think they have lost

their connection with the heartland of this Nation, with the people who

have borne the burden of the price of freedom through the generations.

Every generation of my family has served in the Armed Forces, not in

glorious ranks of generals and admirals, but in the enlisted ranks,

carrying the rifles and manning the ships that provided the freedom for

the people in this body to say the things that they have said. And I

would say this, Mr. Speaker, I do not care about the media. What we

need to do is allow these soldiers and these marines to go into every

editorial board, into every Rotary Club and chamber in this Nation and

let them tell their story. Let them tell their story in the communities

and in the fiscal courts. Let them tell their stories in the

courthouses and on the street corners, and I guarantee you that these

people who purport to be experts on things they know nothing about will

be discredited and things will be shown for what they are. Because you

cannot refute a 100 percent reenlistment rate in units where these

soldiers have borne this burden and they go back over and over again.

To you military people who are watching, I want to say thank you, as

a fellow soldier. To you who cherish our freedoms, I thank you. For you

in the press who enjoy this freedom but you abuse it, know that the

price that is paid by those who frankly have greater moral character

than you, who refuse to cover the truth of what they are doing, know

that it is their sacrifice, not yours, that allows you to share what

you share.

And finally, to those of our citizens in the heartland know that

these men and women are doing a great service to prepare the way for us

to adapt to the 21st century; that we will have a safe country and a

community to pass these freedoms on to the next generation.

I will leave you with a story from the 1/508, commanded by Colonel

Tim McGuire, as he was moving northward from Shirana forward operating

base to Orgune. He shared that coming back from that mission a little

boy ran from a village up to his convoy. He stopped. He did not speak

Pashto, and the interpreter asked the little boy what the problem was.

The little boy had waved, as many of the children I saw in Afghanistan

did at the Americans all the time. He asked the little boy what he was

concerned about, and he said that two bad men had come into the village

and put something in the road. That little boy saved potentially

American soldiers.

The enemy were dealt with and that village is open and free, but

Colonel McGuire asked the question which encapsulates all of what this

struggle between radical Islamic extremism and the values of freedom

and dignity of the individual that we cherish expresses, and he said,

Young man, why did you do that, knowing that there was risk associated

with what that boy did. He looked at this airborne colonel in the 173rd

Airborne Brigade, and he said to Tim, before you Americans came, I

could not go to school.

That is the contrast that we have here: freedom, opportunity, hope,

true faith, or extremism, persecution, tyranny and hatred. Thank you

for you who serve.