Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank Chairman Hunter for

arranging for this opportunity to comment upon the remarkable honor and

valor of our United States soldiers.

One thing that I reflect on is the high quality of leaders in our

military that we are producing right now in Iraq. We have 1st

lieutenants with two tours under their belts already. The seamlessness

with which our Guard and Reserves fight alongside our active duty is

another tremendous evolution benefiting this conflict and paving the

way for future military successes. We are making a significant

investment in world peace with the strong commitment of our men and

women overseas. These brave soldiers fight in a land they've never been

for people they've never met to extend the fundamental rights of

liberty.

The Middle East is yet another test of this commitment to liberty.

Liberty is defended by the vigilant who are willing to sacrifice to

defend freedom and stabilize the country's civil institutions. In

January of this year, 2005, over 8 million Iraqi citizens voted and

reaffirmed only weeks ago with the ratification of their constitution.

What a pleasure it was to observe the Iraqi people defying intimidation

and threats to define the course of their country's destiny. This

dignity, denied them for decades, was afforded to them by the efforts

of those people we honor today.

As Veterans Day approaches let us not forget that the men and women

serving today will join the ranks of those who have selflessly served

this same mission to bring these freedoms to all people. We have

ensured that men and women, active and reserve soldiers from each

service, return to a grateful homeland eager to honor their service and

sacrifice.