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

organizing this tonight, and I would also like to thank the gentleman

for giving me the privilege of leading a Committee on Armed Services

trip to Iraq at the very end of September-early October. It was my very

first trip.

We flew into Kuwait City and landed there on the airstrip to take a

C-130 into Baghdad. There on that airstrip, I had my very first

conversation with one of our soldiers. As I spoke with him, he looked

at me and he said, Ma'am, I know what I am doing, I know why I am doing

it, and if I have anything to do with it, there will never be another

attack on our Nation. He said, So don't worry about me, just pray for

me. And he picked up his gear and he walked away.

As we got on that plane, I had another conversation with one of our

military members who was assigned to that C-130. He told me his

enlistment was almost up, but when he got home he was going to join the

Reserve unit in his home area. And he said to me, You know, I won't be

coming back here anytime soon, because in that Reserve unit, everyone

volunteers to come to Iraq, and I won't have a turn to come back for

some time.

It hit me right there before we ever left Kuwait City that, first of

all, these are volunteers who voluntarily join our military, and many

of them volunteer to go to Iraq or to return to Iraq.

That evening, we had dinner with our troops in Baghdad. A young woman

from Virginia looked me right in the eye, and the first thing she said

was, Why aren't our elected leaders telling America what we are doing?

I told her that I already had determined that, that we had done a very

poor job of telling the American people what they are doing over there,

why they are doing it, the threat to America if they do not succeed,

and the great success stories that they are having there. And I

promised her that we would tell their story here in America.

These people know why they are there. They know what they are doing.

But their question, these American heroes who are serving for us, their

question is, what are the American people thinking and what are they

saying?

That gave me the opportunity to tell them the stories from back home.

To tell them about a cab driver in Phoenix, Arizona, that I met this

summer who told me he is from Iraq, he has been here 16 years, he has

family there, and he goes back on contract to help train the Iraqi

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

cab, turned around and said, Will you please thank the American people

for me for what you have done for Iraq? He said, You people work harder

than anyone I have ever seen. He said, I don't think you even sleep,

and you are doing it all for us.

I told them about a presentation at Sea World this summer before

Shamu came on that was the commercial from the Super Bowl, where our

troops walk into an airport in their camouflage and everyone stood and

clapped. And I told them how the audience when that presentation was

done, they were standing, they were clapping, they were cheering and

they were crying. Of course, I said to my daughter, And you thought you

were in the minority.

What I will tell them next time is what happened in Shannon, Ireland,

on our way back, and a group of Marines walked through the airport in

their camouflage and everyone stood and everyone clapped for those

Marines in Ireland.

But I also told them that I believe that their generation will also

be named. We have talked a lot tonight about World War II, and they are

being named the Greatest Generation. I truly believe history will name

them; and I have decided until history does, that I am going to call

them the Freedom Believers.

We saw the success of what they are doing there. We met with units

that work with IEDs and the EOD unit, that they are able to find and

disarm and blow up a lot of these bombs. We met with the 42nd MP

Brigade.

We toured that base in Baghdad, and then we flew to Balad Air Base.

In that 60-mile trip, flying very fast and very low in an Army

helicopter, what we saw were green agricultural fields. And those

fields, the people that were working them were waving at us in the

helicopter. When I commented on that when I reached Balad to General

Frank Gorenc, he told me that happens all the time. We toured the

hospital there, and we saw that we not only treat Iraqi civilians who

have been injured; we treat

the insurgents or the terrorists themselves that are doing this damage

there.

These young men and women and those commanders know the success that

is taking place in Iraq. They know that Saddam Hussein did not maintain

their infrastructure there, that there was much deferred maintenance,

that there was also deliberate destruction that was caused by sabotage

and looters.

But USAID is hard at work in Iraq. They have a publication that they

have done which talks about the improvements they are making to the

infrastructure, the 2,500 schools countrywide that have been rehabbed,

over 32,000 teachers and administrators that have been taught, $20.7

million in grants to create partnerships between U.S. and Iraqi

universities, 200 USAID missionary personnel there at work, and over

80,000 Iraqis at work in sectors throughout the country.

These young men and women also understand the threat to the Nation.

This shows our having dinner in Baghdad. This is in Qatar as we were

leaving with the military men and women we met there.

But these young men and women and the commanders understand the

threat to the world. We all know that Osama bin Laden made an edict in

1998, and he said, ``Anyone who believes in Allah is to find Americans

and to kill them.''

What this map shows in green is their immediate goal. We have all

heard and read Osama bin Laden's words and their mission to take over

the entire world. None of us can believe that. This is their current

goal. In the very bottom corner is their goal in 100 years, and when

you see that in color and you see that their entire goal is not a

little country in the Middle East, their goal is the entire world, it

makes you understand that they are at war with civilization.

We as Americans, some of us think that Iraq is a local conflict. Iraq

is the centerpiece of that puzzle, of that very much bigger plan of the

people who would go after you and I if they had the opportunity.

It is difficult for us as Americans to understand that and to

understand the threat. They have no tanks and they have no planes. They

use our things. They use our planes. They use our subways. Their target

is not the military; their target is us. It is only the military right

now in Iraq.

Our military men and women know that there is no option but to fight

this war and to win, not only for Iraq, but for us as well. And they

know about the spread of freedom. They are the Freedom Believers. They

know the spread of democracy in the Middle East makes this a safer

world for all of us. What they want is for the American people to

understand that, and I thank them for their service.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for arranging this tonight.