Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for hosting this

special order. And having just returned from Iraq, it is particularly

meaningful to me to acknowledge the gentleman's leadership in this

Congress in traveling to Iraq since the end of hostilities more, I

think, than any other Member of Congress; and having just learned what

that has meant to our troops and what that has meant to the people in

the transition process at the coalition authority, I want to thank him

for that.

There is no question this issue of weapons of mass destruction, which

has become such a political football in America today, represents some

form of an intelligence failure, if by that we recognize that we have

not found the vials of chemical and biological weapons. But it is

absolutely imperative, as the gentleman suggests, to know that if it

was an intelligence failure, it was a world intelligence failure and it

was an intelligence conclusion that was drawn by at least two previous

administrations.

I cite in evidence the remarks of President Bill Clinton on February

17, 1998. Again, these are the words of the President of the United

States about what official U.S. policy was relative to the possession

of weapons of mass destruction by the regime of Saddam Hussein.

President Clinton said. ``And they,'' referring to predators of the

21st century, ``they will be all the more lethal if we allow them to

build arsenals of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and the

missiles to deliver them.'' President Clinton went on to say, ``We

simply cannot allow that to happen. There should be no doubt,''

President Bill Clinton said, ``There should be no doubt Saddam's

ability to produce and deliver weapons of mass destruction poses a

grave threat to the peace of that region and the security of the

world.''

President Clinton went on to say, ``There is no more clear example of

this threat than Saddam Hussein's Iraq. His regime threatens the safety

of his people, the stability of his region,'' and he went on to

describe Iraq as, ``a rogue state with weapons of mass destruction,

ready to use them or provide them to terrorists who have traveled the

world. If we fail to respond today to Saddam Hussein, he will be

emboldened tomorrow by the knowledge that he can act with impunity.''

These are the words of the 42nd President of the United States of

America, William Jefferson Clinton, about the conclusions of the

Intelligence Community and his personal conclusions as our Commander-

in-Chief that Iraq did possess biological and chemical weapons in the

year 1998.

Mr. Speaker, on February 18, completely consistent with

Secretary Albright's remarks, ``In the next century the community of

nations will see more and more of the very kind of threat Iraq poses

now.'' In describing it, President Clinton said, ``A rogue state with

weapons of mass destruction ready to use them or provide them to

terrorists.''

Mr. Speaker, to that end, and I am anxious to get to that

conversation, I have to tell my colleague that the search for weapons

of mass destruction found for the Iraqis that I spoke to in Basra, it

found its locus the day Saddam Hussein was captured by American troops.

This is a man who, according to former prisoners of war, he and his

regime were responsible for the death by incarceration or other means

of 1.2 to 1.3 million of their countrymen. According to Amnesty

International, we have identified the remains thus far in 270 mass

graves of 400,000 men, women, boys, and girls in the mass graves of

Saddam Hussein.

But the weapons-of-mass-destruction issue is an issue, and the

gentleman from Michigan (Mr. Hoekstra) is right to address it in the

beginning inasmuch as it is in the mind of the American people. But

none other than Senator Daschle, who has been the majority leader of

the Senate in recent years, but at the time in 1998 and President

Clinton's decision to fire cruise missiles and attack Iraq was minority

leader, Senator Daschle said, ``We are here today to affirm that we and

the American people stand with the President and the international

community in an effort to end Iraq's weapons of mass destruction

programs and preserve our vital and international interests.''

Mr. Speaker, there is no question whatsoever that the

position of the administration and others in America supported the

conclusion that the intelligence community, not just of the Bush

administration, but of the administration that preceded it came to a

singular conclusion: that Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass

destruction.

I am always anxious to remind my constituents in eastern Indiana that

the reason we know Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction

was because he used them. He used them on his own people. He used them

to kill thousands in Kurdistan in the early 1990s in the immediate

aftermath of the first Persian Gulf War. We are told by eyewitness

accounts of men, women and children running in the middle of the night

out of their bedrooms, out into the streets, grabbing their throats as

they were asphyxiated by mustard gas or some other chemical agent and

killed in the streets and towns of Kurdistan. Chemical weapons were

used against his own people. It is not a subject of theoretical

analysis or

intelligence analysis; but as the gentleman from Michigan knows, it is

a matter of historical fact and record that Saddam Hussein in the early

1990s possessed and used chemical weapons against his own population.

What became of them in the days immediately prior to Operation Iraqi

Freedom, we will continue to investigate. I traveled by the site of the

Iraqi survey group in Baghdad just 1 week ago, and I know in meeting

with the intelligence community there that that search goes on. And as

we continue to bring Iraq forward in the family of nations, and as the

people of Iraq, I believe, become more confident in their own future

and in the end of the dark days of Iraq and the regime and the thugs

that preceded this new Iraqi Governing Council and this new government,

more people will speak and more daylight will shine, and we will

eventually find out what became of this program and its horrendously

dangerous by-products.

Mr. Speaker, a very moving part of my trip to Baghdad was

our meetings at the headquarters of the Coalition Provisional Authority

at Saddam Hussein's palace.

One of 100. It was the size of three or four resorts in

Florida and twice as opulent. But across the street, there is a bunker

underground hidden underneath what appears to be a garbage dump or a

broken and destroyed building. It was three stories underground. It was

one of those sophisticated bunkers we hear about; but what was most

provocative to me was to learn that in that bunker was an enormous

financial investment in a ventilation system which was designed as a

countermeasure to the distribution of chemical or biological weapons.

There was a decontamination room to essentially remove chemical or

biological agents that were on a person before they could enter the

bunker itself.

For a regime that, according to some of the administration's critics,

never had weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein's own bunker,

literally down the street from his primary palace, had an enormous

multi-million dollar investment to protect him from weapons that he

apparently did not possess.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I think that

the statement that the gentleman just made is extremely important. I

think that statement should be highlighted and underscored and chiseled

in a place where every American can read it.

As he said again here on Capitol Hill, Dr. David Kay, weapons

inspector who led the original effort after the war with the Iraqi

survey group, he said what he found was more dangerous than what they

believed would be there. In terms of the establishment of a diverse

program of chemical and biological weapons, as the gentleman has with

great particularity described, was prepared in the event of the

strictures being lifted, was prepared to produce large amounts of these

types of weapons.

Of course we found the nose cones on missiles hollowed out just for

the size of an inclusion of a vial of certain types of agents that

would have no other reason to be hollowed out as a warhead in that way.

We found these munitions in large numbers. But David Kay said that what

we found was in many respects more dangerous than what we expected to

find.

If the gentleman will yield, I would like to know why

President Bill Clinton got it wrong. I would like to know why Vice

President Gore had the weapons of mass destruction estimate for Iraq so

wrong. And I do not say that in a partisan spirit, I say that because

if, in fact, there were never any weapons of mass destruction following

the time he used them against his own people in the early 1990s, then

there was an intelligence failure. But if it was, it truly was an

institutional failure; not, as some would suggest, not associated with

the present administration, but associated with an institutional

failure that, I will add one other point if the gentleman will permit

me, was not just an intelligence failure of the U.S. intelligence

failure, but it was, as I said at the beginning, a world intelligence

failure.

The intelligence communities of every one of our allies in the

western world, in this cause, and even many who chose not to join us,

France and Germany and Russia's intelligence community, as their votes

in the U.N. Security Council support, all of them came to the

conclusion, unequivocally, that Saddam Hussein possessed biological and

chemical weapons.

The gentleman has caught me in a little bit of a

rhetorical joust, and it seems to me that those who want to say we did

not find what would have amounted, if we were absolutely correct, to a

two-car garage load of biological and chemical weapons, it would not

have filled more than that. But if we were wrong at the time, we went

to war that that did not exist, that is the straining of the gnat when

we ignore the elephant in the room.

The elephant in the room is the man and his regime were a weapon of

mass destruction, terrorized and killed over 1 million of his own

people, had these weapons and used them against his own people in the

past, and, as the gentleman from Michigan says eloquently, most

assuredly our conclusion that he was a menace and threat was accurate.

Apart from the inspiration of meeting particularly

Hoosiers in uniform in Baghdad, the most inspiring for me, and this

picture gives evidence, was the opportunities we had a week ago to meet

with ordinary Iraqis, people working construction, men and women of

various traditions, and even various faiths.

One of our meetings, and it may astound some that could be looking

in, Mr. Speaker, is we had a meeting with a Shia cleric, a Shiite

Muslim politician and the Catholic Bishop of Basra, who walked in in

full religious garb, embraced the Shia cleric, as they obviously had

great affection for one another, and then spoke of the religious

pluralism that was a tradition for over 800 years in the communities of

Basra in southeastern Iraq.

That is absolutely right. Basra itself is just south of

the convergence of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, which the Bible

records to be the location of the Garden of Eden. At Tallil Air Base,

you can see essentially a pyramid from 2100 B.C. that marks the

birthplace of Abraham, what was known as Ur of the Chaldeans. It is a

place of incalculable historical value and significance, and the people

reflect that.

But I have to tell the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. Speaker, that I

fell in love with the Iraqi people that I met. The two qualities of the

people that I met, and, again, it was only 60 or 70 regular Iraqis that

we spent significant time with in the course of that weekend, but the

Iraqi people that I met were highly literate, most of them spoke

functional English, which was helpful to me, and the two

characteristics, there were three. Number one, they were people who had

very strong opinions, which made me feel at home, being from Indiana

and the Midwest, as the gentleman from Michigan is.

We sat in a meeting, and, boy we heard it. Some people did not like

how we were spending money on construction, other people did not like

how we were investing in domestic security. But they had strong

opinions, they were articulate, and they were revelling in the ability

to express the opinions for the first time in their lifetimes.

I thank the gentleman. That was evident. The reason I

start with that is to say this was not a group of people that were

handpicked to tell four Congressmen what they wanted to hear. These

people had some sharp elbows. But when you would ask any Iraqi, what do

you think of our decision, along with 33 other nations, to remove

Saddam Hussein, they would stop in many cases, their eyes would well up

with tears, they would often grab us by the hand, and, as one Shia

cleric looked me in the eye and said through an interpreter, Saddam

Hussein was a nightmare, and I quote, he said, because I will never

forget it, he said, ``The day you defeated Saddam Hussein

was like a dark curtain being lifted off of the Iraqi people and the

daylight shone in.''

The sense of gratitude among the Iraqis, not only leaders, but rank

and file folks that we met, was deeply moving to me as an American, and

it was real and it was genuine. And I believe that from what they said,

that among the 10 million souls who call themselves Iraqis, it is the

dominant, overwhelming opinion of the people, one of gratitude to the

people of the United States of America for ending a nightmare in their

Nation.

These are the stories, Mr. Speaker, that are not being

told. These are the stories of compassion that are, however, reaching

the Iraqi people. They may not make it on American broadcast television

with great frequency, but they are reaching the hearts of the Iraqi

people. You can see from this photograph, which is one of literally

dozens I returned with, these men were construction workers at a USAID

program, and some were attending a class on democracy. And we just

stopped, and I think you can see even from this poor reproduction the

warmth with which I was greeted by regular Iraqis.

I share one anecdote. We walked into a classroom, they are holding

these democracy classes all over Iraq, and they are probably at, what

we would say in the United States as a 5th grade level, where they are

teaching what it means to live under a constitution, what the Bill of

Rights are. We went into one of these classes. They are all adults. And

I walked in, and, of course, was listening in for a time as they spoke

in Arabic.

Then they rose and started to greet me and a few other Members of

Congress. Several women wearing traditional garb walked up. I said,

``Do you speak English?'' They all said yes. They proceeded to share

with me, and I have got them in my office, handwritten poems about what

democracy means to them. And on my Web site, Mike.Spence.House.Gov you

can see this picture, literally these women handing this to me as if it

were a newborn infant, this poem, their hands literally shaking at

excitement with the idea of being able to be involved in representative

democracy as citizens.

I close on this point. I looked them in the eye and I said, ``You all

are like the founding generation of the United States of America. You

are like the people that lived in 1776.'' I said, ``I envy you, because

future generations of Iraqis will look back at you and thank you for

your courage and your success and your belief in a free future.''

And they all giggled with delight; they understood what I meant and

were obviously thrilled with the comparison to our founding generation.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, because the point he

just made to me is a colossal one. The very willingness of regular

Iraqis to attend democracy classes sponsored by the United States

Agency for International Development is an act of personal courage. The

day after we left Baghdad, literally a week ago, was the bloodiest day

in Iraq since the end of the war. Four mosques were attacked in Karbala

and in Baghdad where we just were. Nearly 300 Iraqis were killed; many

more hundreds injured, and all of the mosques that were attacked, as

the gentleman alluded to, all the mosques that were attacked were

clerics and imams who were cooperating or understood to be cooperating

with the transition to democracy in Iraq.

One last point. The Iraqis that we spoke to were rather incredulous

that we were in any way surprised by the violence. I will never forget

the Iraqi who said to me, these people killed over a million of our

countrymen to hold on to power. Why does it seem surprising to your

people that they would kill to get it back?

And I yield back.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and I thank him for

that moving explanation. I can candidly tell the gentleman that I did

not have the presence to ask why almost every one of the nearly 80

Iraqis that I met ended every conversation like this; but I am very

moved to learn it on this blue carpet, that it meant this is the

intensity of the gratitude and the feelings. But I can attest on this

floor that virtually every Iraqi with whom I spoke ended with their

hand on their heart, speaking to me as a member of the United States.

And I really believe, although intelligence estimates are that we are

dealing with 1,000 to 2,000 insurgents, left over thugs, imported

terrorists, people that are doing the killing that is going on and

purposing to do more, but this is 1,000 to 2,000 essentially criminals

and terrorists in a country of 10 million. And I believe in my heart,

and I know the gentleman is my senior in Congress and often cautions me

about over generalizations, but I believe in my heart if the Iraqi

people could look the American people in the eye and rise as one man or

one woman, they would be standing with their hand over their heart.

The people of Iraq that I spoke to are profoundly and overwhelmingly

and emotionally grateful to the people of the United States of America,

of Great Britain and Spain and all of the 33 nations that freed them

from this nightmare of Saddam Hussein. I think of particularly the

moment where a man who had been jailed 12 times over 25 years, who now

is heading up an organization to identify the fate of nearly 1.2

million Iraqi men, women, and boys and girls who are still missing, who

were dragged from their homes because of the belief in their disloyalty

to Saddam Hussein. No due process of law, no trial of a jury of their

peers, simply dragged away, never to be heard from again. And that man,

as I expressed my appreciation for his courage, put his hand over his

heart and expressed his thanks to the people of the United States of

America for ending the nightmare, as he described it, of Saddam

Hussein.

We did, Mr. Speaker. As this picture attests, this is the

gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton), who led our delegation with great

distinction, and me with a number of Hoosiers in the Air Force at the

air base south of Baghdad. We were able to dine, as the gentleman from

Michigan did, with a number of men and women in uniform; and it was

truly inspiring.

As the gentleman suggested, Mr. Speaker, I just have to say that

among the Iraqis with whom I spoke when I was in Baghdad and Basra, and

among the soldiers, both British and American, when I would bring up

the subject of weapons of mass destruction or the lack thereof or the

search therefore, people would be completely uninterested. I remember

speaking to an American intelligence officer who had been in charge of

surveying a handful of the 270 mass graves that we found so far. And I

looked him in the eye and I said, What say you of the lack of weapons

of mass destruction? And he looked at me and he looked down at his

shoes covered with sand, and he looked back at me with emotion in his

eyes and he said, sir, from what I have seen, we did what needed to be

done, whether we ever find any of those kinds of weapons or not. And

this was the attitude that I got among our troops. I will say this

without hesitation.

Having walked into the palace of Saddam Hussein myself and walked

into another one of his palaces and seen the opulence with which he

indulged himself and his cronies, and then having walked through the

ruination of Basra, which is a city with 20 percent of the sewage

capacity that it requires, with 50 percent of the electricity it

requires, 30 years of neglect and repression, and the tyranny and

murder of over 1 million people, I am going to agree strongly with that

intelligence officer. We did what needed to be done in Iraq and we, as

these soldiers reflected again and again, and the gentleman from

Michigan got this as well in his words, these soldiers know we were on

the side of the right in ending the 30-year reign of a murderous

dictator, Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Speaker, I just remember when my colleague first

returned from Baghdad, he shared with a number of us, his colleagues,

video footage of Baghdad as a bustling city, a very modern city, which

it was. And the reason we went to Basra the first day was because

Ambassador Bremer and other officials were locked in round-the-clock

negotiations over the constitution. So they sent us as the first

delegation of American Congressmen to Basra.

I have to tell you that going from Basra, which is like a Third World

country, I mean it is ravaged not by war, it is ravaged by 30 years of

neglect and tyranny by Saddam Hussein who refused to, even though

billions of dollars were flowing from the Oil for Food program into his

regime, and he was building more and more palaces, these monuments to

his own greatness with marble floors and crystal chandeliers the size

of minivans hanging from the hallway ceilings, but then go to Basra,

and there is ramshackle dirt buildings falling down, roads in

disrepair, sewers in disrepair, it demonstrated to me that contrast

more than anything between the bustling city of Saddam Hussein to a

city under the control of Basra, the Shiite population, the mendacity

of this regime and the self-indulgence and evil of this regime letting

so many people live in poverty while they live in sinful opulence.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. This

photograph illustrates a brief meeting that we had with Ambassador Paul

Bremer across the hallway from the negotiations over the constitution.

My colleague spoke of the long work we have ahead. There is a new

interim Constitution, which is a radical document in the Middle East,

people have basic Bill of Rights freedoms in this ancient land for the

first time ever in their history. In this picture actually appears the

draft of that interim constitution that Ambassador Bremer calls it.

If we will stay the course, not only will we see the changes and the

repentance that we have seen of Colonel Qaddafi, but I believe we are

going to see the transformation of the society of Iraq as an Islamic

country in their own form of democracy and freedom and a society built

on rights that will transform that part of the world for our children

and grandchildren and for the children and grandchildren of the good

people of Iraq.