Mr. Speaker, it was certainly a blessing to

have traveled with the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. Osborne) and with

the entire delegation to Iraq, the time that we spent in Jordan, the

times that we spent with the ladies from Iraq as we tried to relate to

them how wonderful a democracy is and how wonderfully it works in our

country.

I had an opportunity on more than one occasion, once before, in

February, to go to Iraq. And when I was there it was just before the

insurgency really started. It was February of 2004. And we spent time

in Basra, as well as in Baghdad in the Sunni triangle. The troops I met

there were upbeat, they were excited. We had, very quickly with the

military that we had, won a war from what many of us in this country

felt would be more difficult. But I think the enthusiasm of our troops,

the training of our troops, the commitment of our troops to be sure

that Iraq was liberated from a tyrant called Saddam Hussein was the

driving force in those who serve in our military services. I think that

all of us who have been to Iraq or Afghanistan have renewed energy for

support of our troops that are there.

If one goes to Iraq or Afghanistan, they also have this deep, abiding

feeling that if they only knew how it was in America, if every person

only knew in this country how it is in America how wonderful it would

be, because the insurgencies and the occurrences that are happening

there today would cease to exist, because even they would realize what

a greater life they could have, a better life they could have if they

would just look at this country as an example.

Can that happen? I hope it can. I think it can. We must believe that

it can, and we must be sure that we support the newly elected officials

of Iraq to be sure that that happens.

I was asked a question in late 2003 by a sixth grader in one of the

schools in Manchester, Tennessee. And sixth graders will ask, How much

do we make as a Congressman? Have we met the President? What kind of

person is he? Do we like him? Do we have a family? Do we have children?

Do we have grandchildren? Obviously they look at me, and they think he

has grandchildren, which I do. So we get a lot of questions.

But this one little girl, with almost a certainty and it seems like

she had just a mission, she said, ``Congressman, do you think we can

establish a democracy in Iraq?'' And generally what I would tell

someone at the general store, where I go on Saturdays when I have time,

or on Sundays after church, generally what I would tell them is that we

have to try, we have to try, because it is important that people living

throughout the world have an opportunity to enjoy the freedom that we

enjoy in this country.

But I felt that sixth grader, who may not have watched TV, needed a

more concise answer; and my comment to her was that virtually all the

democracies today, Israel, started from within, as a result of a

holocaust and as a result of many of those individuals removed from

other countries, in many cases arrested for being expelled from those

countries.

This great country we live in with the assistance of other nations,

obviously our army that was put together, the Continental Army, fought

to achieve our liberty and our freedom and we established, as a result

of that, a democracy where we are governed by our Constitution. So most

of the democracies today started from within.

And I was looking at Iraq and saying, I am not sure this is possible,

until I made the visit to Iraq. I realized democracies can be

established without an uprising from within, because I believe when our

troops went to Iraq and we deposed the tyrant who was imposing on the

people of Iraq, the ill will that he was imposing, the horrible

circumstances, the deaths of so many that he took, I realized that

those individuals in Iraq have suffered and suffered greatly.

So I truly believe that in Iraq we can see a democracy established.

And what I told the young lady was that if we can work in the Middle

East to establish a democracy in Iraq and perhaps in Afghanistan, in my

opinion, it will be the crowning accomplishment of this century.

Democracies do not go to war with each other.

So I am extremely impressed with our troops that I met there. I am

impressed and pleased with what I think is a great opportunity for a

country in the Middle East to reach out and be governed by laws rather

than a man. When we are governed by laws instead of men, then we do

have a democracy. And I truly believe that will happen.

I watched the women, the Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative Training

Conference, and I sat with them, like all of us did. We talked to them.

And I was sitting in this breakout group where there were eight or ten

individuals, and we were talking about whether or not a shelter should

be built for women who may have been abused, or whether there should be

a safe haven for them; and that was just part of a schedule problem

they had to solve. It did not matter whether they supported or did not

support it; they had to find a solution to it.

And this one lady sitting to my right continued to get very fretful.

She was extremely irritated because she was in this group that was in

the process of putting together a reason why there needed to be

shelters in Iraq for women who had been abused.

There was another group that was put together, problem solving, that

would say, We do not need a shelter for women. She finally left that

group. And when one of the ladies who was helping to put the program

together came to me, I said, I do not think I have ever seen as much

fear in anyone's eyes as I saw in that woman's, and I do not understand

why she would be so fearful of even putting together a plan which is

like problem solving in math skills, why she would be so frightened.

She came back to me a little bit later and she said, The lady has had

an attempt on her life because she was advocating this in Iraq and she

was fearful that somehow it would get back to her neighbors that she

was participating in just problem solving.

So when I realized that these ladies who came to Jordan to be a

participant in this initiative, talking about democracy, and all of

those who were traveling were actually fired upon with small arms fire,

it opened up my eyes about the challenges that lie ahead for the nation

of Iraq. But with the heart of the women that I met and with others

that in Iraq that are Iraqi citizens, the men there, I truly believe

that we have made the right decision, and I believe we will see a

democracy established in the Middle East in Iraq.

One of the things that impressed me was the troops, all of them,

wanted me to be sure to tell folks back home, We are safe. We are okay.

Let our families know that we are okay. Great morale, totally

committed.

The district I represent is in the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee.

We have a volunteer spirit in Tennessee. The 278th Cavalry is one of

two of the cavalries in our Nation's Army. The regular cavalry was

brought back from Iraq. The 278th was activated; 2,200 members of that

278th, of 3,000, are from Tennessee's Fourth Congressional District

that I represent.

I met some of them in Iraq, and I can assure the folks back home, we

can all be proud of our soldiers that are serving us in Iraq and other

parts of the world. The ones I met with, if one is a father or a mother

or a husband or a wife or a son or a daughter or a grandparent of one

of these troops, they can rest assured they are making us proud, and I

know they are making them proud.

I thank the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. Osborne) for the opportunity

to go on the visit. It was a wonderful trip. I got to know a lot about

the gentleman. As a matter of fact, a young fellow named Chris Ruehl

was telling us about the 278th, if the gentleman from Nebraska

remembers, and he got emotional and showed pictures, and he even found

out some of the trials that we had had in Tennessee, which I will not

express here on the House floor, but he even gave us a history of part

of Tennessee that he learned from some of our 278th. So our folks of

the 278th are serving us well in Iraq, and when they come back home, we

will welcome them with open arms.