Mr. Speaker, I remember the

inexorable slide towards the absolute irrelevance of the international

system during the decade of the 1990s and the first few years of this

decade, Saddam Hussein having in fact purchased just about every

relevant United Nations leader and world leader, in fact, even in our

friendly continent of Europe, except of course for President Bush and

Prime Minister Blair and Prime Minister Aznar. Saddam Hussein and, we

must remember, Mr. Speaker, the Oil-for-Food program and its billions

of dollars siphoned off to purchase world and United Nations leaders.

Saddam Hussein flouted his disdain for the international community and

its, according to him, silly norms, laws, and resolutions. Almost 20 of

them, Mr. Speaker, he systematically ignored and laughed at.

He called in al Zarqawi of al Qaeda to Iraq, joining next door

Afghanistan as a state dedicated to welcoming and fostering

international terrorists. In Afghanistan, as my late father Rafael

Diaz-Balart would tell me, my late father whose wisdom far exceeded his

formal education of five degrees from universities in Europe and one on

this continent, he would tell me, ``There in Afghanistan is the

Taliban, the Taliban who torture women and who have opened that country

to the training camps of international terrorists.''

And in 1993, we saw the attacks coming from those terrorists to here,

to New York City, the World Trade Center, and then the bombings of

American embassies in Africa, and even an attack on a United States

ship, the Cole. Nothing happened. But then came 9/11, Mr. Speaker, and

it became evident that we could no longer allow despots like Saddam and

the Taliban to ignore international sanctions and resolutions passed by

the United Nations Security Council, no matter how many billions of

dollars they spent purchasing world leaders.

This is, Mr. Speaker, the debate of our era. We cannot wait until

international terrorism attacks us. We must

take the war to international terrorism and defeat international

terrorism before the terrorists attack us. That is the debate of our

era, as President Bush has reiterated so often. And that is a debate

that we as a country and as a Congress must engage in, and I am pleased

to see that we are doing so today.