Mr. Speaker, the gentleman mentioned the main road

from Baghdad and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel)

indicated earlier tonight that we have been holding this Iraq Watch

special order for some period of months now. Those who have listened to

us before may recall that I have mentioned in the past that I was

privileged to be in the first delegation of American Congress Members

who were able to get into Iraq, leave the Baghdad airport and go into

what is now the Green Zone in May after the initial attack on Baghdad.

We were there in late May on the day that Ambassador Bremer took the

reins of control from General Garner. Forgive me for going over some

past ground, but, unfortunately, what is being cited by the gentleman

from Washington (Mr. Inslee) and by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr.

Strickland) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel) tonight

requires this for a very simple reason.

When we hear of standing up or creating this Army, creating these

forces, that was the goal that was stated to us the very first day that

Ambassador Bremer was there, supposedly based on the work that General

Garner was supposed to be doing up to that time. And we continue to

have reports in the presses as if this is something suddenly just

discovered.

On that day, we sat at the table with Ambassador Bremer and General

Garner. I recall very clearly saying to

them, we have just been down this road from the airport, the

international airport in Baghdad here, and I said to them. You are

going to need 10,000 soldiers just to guard that highway. I said. It is

a strip of tar going from the airport in the middle of a desert into

Baghdad. This is not the Big Dig up in Boston or entering metropolitan

Atlanta. This is not finding your way around Philadelphia or New York.

This is a strip of tar from another big strip of tar where planes land

into Baghdad. I said, there are no lights. There is no possibility of

being able to stop people planting mines or coming up with shoulder-

held rocket grenade launchers, explosive propellants of all kinds.

And now here we are nearing the end of 2004, and you cannot even go

on that road today. This is a debacle. This is a disaster. This is

taking place right now in circumstances in which we are observing

generals saying to their troops, witnessed by embedded reporters with

television cameras, drawing the analogy to Hue in Vietnam.

I am old enough to have been involved in the discussions that took

place during the 1960s with what we were doing in Vietnam with a half a

million soldiers and an indigenous Army fighting with the South

Vietnamese that could fight, that was trained and was equipped. And the

analogy was Hue in Vietnam. Fallujah is going to be like Hue. Hue was a

disaster for us. A few more wins like that, and we are completely

undone.

What we forget is the actual military activity that took place had

nothing to do with the war in the sense of whether or not we would be

successful politically or militarily. The actual circumstances of the

combat and the capabilities of the soldiers, all of which have been

cited by us over and over again, that is not the issue. The competency

of the American soldier is not the issue. The willingness of the

American soldier to fight or the bravery, the professionalism, that is

not the issue as such. Whether they are equipped properly, of course,

that is an issue for us, but the political reality is this is an

unmitigated disaster. We are setting the foundation and groundwork, if

you will, for decades, if not centuries, of opposition to us as a

result of what is going on right now.

You need only go to look at how it is characterized around the

country. I was visiting with my mother in Florida, and I have been to

Massachusetts. I have gone all over the country. The Palm Beach Post,

the Providence Journal, how is it characterized? Here is what the

Providence Journal said on Monday, November 15.

``The absence of insurgent bodies in Fallujah has remained an

enduring mystery.'' It is no mystery. This is a guerilla fight.

In the same paper:

``But much of the city lay in smoking ruins. Isolated bands of rebels

still harassed American and Iraqi soldiers.'' Rebels against what?

``The military victory appeared to be nearly overshadowed by insurgent

violence elsewhere, particularly in the northern city of Mosul.''

Again quoting:

``The Governor of Mosul province, saying he had lost faith in local

security forces, called in thousands of Kurdish militiamen for the

first time to quell the insurgent uprising there.''

Today a hearing was held on the staffing requirements, the personnel

requirements for the Guard and the Reserve, testimony at the Committee

on Armed Services today. Happy faces, it was characterized to me by a

Republican Member here tonight, a stalwart member of the committee. And

I reiterate again with respect to the many times we have appeared on

the floor, this is not a Republican versus Democratic issue. The

Committee on Armed Services tries not to operate in that kind of a

context. We try to operate on the basis of the security interests of

the United States. One of our colleagues said to us, ``They put on

happy faces today.'' What the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee)

has just quoted, what these other two of my colleagues here have been

quoting is that we are living in a fantasy. I was asked by a former

Member today, What are you doing over at the Capitol? I said, We're

organizing our delusions. We are in the midst of organizing our

delusions.

I would yield with one observation, though, as has

been stated by our colleagues here tonight. The thing that I most

regret about coming back this evening is that shortly we will be taking

leave of the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Hoeffel). He is the

founder of this opportunity that the rest of us have seized upon week

after week. He has been the guiding light and the inspiration for this.

I deeply regret that he will not be here next year because,

unfortunately, I am afraid we are going to have to be here next year.

But I can tell him that the fire that he has lit in us and in others

who have come here will not go out, and we will try to carry on the

legacy that he has established for us to live up to.

Not a bit.

In that context, then, you have indicated, yes, a

Marshall Plan might be in order, but that

presumes that the fighting has ended. The fighting has not ended. It is

nowhere near ending. You cannot make an investment in somewhere, where

again I will quote, most of the city lay in smoking ruins.

Another quote: ``Tanks and armored vehicles, their turret guns

blazing in all directions, finished the sweep through the city.'' We

are destroying everything in our path. And then the only thing that I

see is that, well, we will be responsible, the United States is going

to have to be responsible for the rebuilding. Who? Another Halliburton?

Another series of projects to be laid out? You cannot guarantee that

the people who are going to do the building will be safe.

So all of this is a fantasy. It is a delusion, that somehow we are

going to succeed with this. My final point on that is that it is the

military itself then at that point that will have difficulties because

we are not going to be able to recruit. Despite the happy face that has

been put on this, the Reserves are falling behind in their recruitment

and retention. The Guard is falling behind in their recruitment and

retention, and those strains and those stresses are going to become

more apparent in the days and months to come, and the stress and strain

in the days and months to come will manifest itself in the inability of

the United States to have the kinds of deployments under the

circumstances that would be most ideal to maximize the efficiency of

the Armed Forces.

It is not that they will not try. It is not that they will not do

their best. It is not that they will not give their all. It is that we

will be letting them down in the first place by requiring something of

them that actually is against the protocols and the standards that we

have set up in order to have the best possible military capacity.