Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about two issues, Iraq

and Guantanamo, to talking about war and prisons. We have heard a lot

about both in the last few months. And I think it is incumbent upon us

to understand the situation.

We hear about Iraq and the situation in Iraq. And I was fortunate on

January 30 to be in Iraq, along with the gentleman from Connecticut

(Mr. Shays), two Members of Congress on Election Day to see a nation

born, a new nation with a democracy. The cynics said it would never

happen. They said the Iraqi people were not smart enough to have a

democracy, they did not know what it was like.

Yet 60 percent of those people went out and voted, defiant of the

tyranny, of the terrorists. Almost 60 of them were murdered either

going to or from the polls, but yet they went and voted. Almost 300

others were injured going to and from the polls, but yet they voted.

The timetable for that country to have a democracy is a short one,

almost 2 years. But we forget that our own country took 13 years, from

the beginning of the war for independence and the setting of the

Constitution of the United States. It took us a long time.

Yet we expect more of the Iraqi people. And they are performing that.

And I was honored to be there to see those people, to tell me

personally that they appreciated American and America's

youth sacrificing so this nation could be a free nation.

I saw that they are concerned for American troops, the morale of the

American troops. The concern that the Iraqi people had was that we

would cut and run and leave before the job was done, before the Iraqi

people were able to control their own country. But we will not cut and

run, we will finish the job. It is not the way we do things in America,

to run from a fight, liberating a country that wishes to be free.

And now we hear talk about Guantanamo Bay, the situation. Let me tell

you something. Mr. Speaker, I have been to jails, I have been to

prisons. I was a judge for 22 years, I was a prosecutor for 8. I have

seen numerous jails, numerous prisons in the State of Texas and our

Federal prisons. I know what jails are like. I know what prisons are

like. And to compare Guantanamo Bay to a Nazi concentration camp, to

the Soviet gulags is outrageous, it is an affront to those millions of

people who died in those concentration camps.

My dad served in World War II. And as a teenager, he saw those

concentration camps. He helped liberate them with other Americans.

Recently I had the chance to see some of those concentration camps some

50 years later. And to say that Guantanamo Bay is like a concentration

camp minimizes the death that occurred in those concentration camps in

Germany. And it is an insult to these people that died there.

I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, that those people who talk and

criticize our situation in Iraq, that they go to Iraq. I went there for

that very purpose, to see our troops. And I think it is important that

those people who criticize Guantanamo Bay, that they go to Guantanamo

Bay and see that jail there.

That is why I am recommending and offering that we go there as

Members of Congress, we go as soon as we can to see the situation

firsthand. We need to understand that the people in Guantanamo Bay are

terrorists. We talk about them being prisoners of war, but to be

protected under the Geneva Convention, Mr. Speaker, a person must have

a commander, they must wear a uniform, they must not take and have

concealed weapons. They must kill civilians or the innocent.

And the terrorists that are in that jail down in Guantanamo Bay are

not protected by the Geneva Convention because they violate these

rules, these rules. And yet we hear of all of the bad things that are

occurring.

I think it is incumbent to see the situation firsthand and make our

own determination because it is important that we not cut and run from

this situation in Guantanamo Bay any more than we cut and run from

Iraq.