Mr. Speaker, late last October I traveled to Iraq

with several other Members of Congress, and what I saw was a country in

tatters, a country that had experienced little or no infrastructure

investment in decades.

But I also saw a people who, despite torture, government-sponsored

slaughter and oppression on the scale of Lenin, a people who, despite

all this, retained a glimmer of hope. And I thought, is it not amazing?

Thirty years of torture, and Saddam and his henchmen could not break

the spirit of the Iraqi people. They still had that thirst for freedom

and that thirst for opportunity.

Today, watch the news that comes from Iraq. Occasionally look past

the newscaster, actually take a look at the hustle and bustle behind

the newscaster. You will see marketplaces, traffic jams, people on

their way to and from work. That is the free market at work.

President Bush is the focus of an enormous amount of partisan

political criticism. There are those, mostly on the other side of the

aisle, who believe that simply getting bin Laden would end terrorism.

They think we were wrong to go to Iraq, that Saddam could be contained.

In short, those opposed to our work in Iraq believe Saddam's regime had

no role in terrorism and that our effort will not bear any positive

results for America and the world.

What a shortsighted, small view of the world and a basic

misunderstanding of terrorism. Terrorism will not be stopped by

removing a leader or a command structure. Terrorism is not going to be

that easy to tackle.

What is going to make a difference could be this: Iraq has an interim

Constitution on schedule and they are moving toward freedom. Iraq's

electricity levels are exceeding pre-war capacity. They passed that

benchmark last fall. The international community has pledged $32

billion to improve schools, health care, roads, water and sanitation.

The nation now has a stable currency. A free press is growing. Iraqis

have access to more diverse, independent sources of news. Hundreds of

democratic meetings are taking place all across Iraq. America has

captured 45 of the 55 most-wanted members of Hussein's regime. There

are 900,000 telephone subscribers and 225,000 wireless subscribers. All

of Iraq's 22 universities and 43 technical institutions and colleges

are open. And, this may not sound important, but its value is

immeasurable, the Iraqi children no longer have to recite ``long live

leader Saddam Hussein'' each morning.

Some still believe all of this is irrelevant to the war on terrorism.

Do you think terrorists are worried about what we are doing in Iraq and

Afghanistan? Absolutely. Do you think terrorists fear this President?

Do they fear America? You bet they do. The terrorists fear America. I

do not mean that figuratively. Those who would destroy America, they

literally fear this President and the resolve of the American people

and our military, because we have not been afraid to take swift,

decisive action.

President Bush said America would not tolerate al Qaeda, that we

would not tolerate a Middle East that pumped out hatred and vitriol.

Our engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq speak volumes to the terror

network.

Does our work in Iraq make hostile nations think twice about

supporting terrorism? Yes, indeed, it does. Will our effort to bring

the Iraqi people into the modern world, into the free marketplace, the

community of free nations, make a difference in the long struggle to

destroy what breeds terrorism? Absolutely it will.