Mr. Speaker, as we have listened to debates over the

last several days, actually last several weeks, there has been a lot of

rhetoric about how poorly things are going in Afghanistan and Iraq, the

administration has no plan, et cetera, and along with many other

Members of Congress, I visited both countries within about the last 5

or 6 weeks, and it did not seem to me that the information I was

getting and seeing squared with what we have been hearing.

In Afghanistan, for instance, the Taliban is out. They were a

tremendously oppressive regime. Terrorist training camps, and of

course, Afghanistan was the hotbed of terrorist activity, have been

shut down. Most of the funding has been dried up. Al Qaeda is on the

defense, and of course, the democratic loyal jurga formed a

constitution which I think was a tremendous step toward democracy.

Women have been given a significant role. Elections have been scheduled

this summer, and they have a great leader in Karzai, and I think there

is a great chance he will be elected President.

All of this has been accomplished with 13,000 coalition troops

controlling this country, very little loss of life. It has been a

tremendous military victory and a great victory for those who are

opponents of terrorism.

Iraq, of course, is a little behind the time line of Afghanistan,

because it came several months later; but the infrastructure has been

restored.

The water is running, the electricity is on, and 17,000

reconstruction projects have been completed; 17,000 projects have been

completed. The schools are open. They have been given significant aid;

33,000 teachers have received training in just the last few weeks. The

hospitals and clinics are open. There is much better health care. There

has been a 6,000 percent increase in health care service expenditures

in the last few months. The economy is expanding. Shops and businesses

are springing up. Consumer demand is good. Wages are between 25 and 30

times higher than they were under Saddam Hussein. So the economy is

showing real signs of life. One million more cars in this country than

a year ago. Newspaper and television stations are springing up as well.

Insurgent attacks on our troops have decreased dramatically. About

all the attacks we are hearing about lately are on Iraqi citizens,

mainly because they are the only soft targets that they have left.

Weapons and ammunition supplies have been destroyed, and an Iraqi army

of 133,000 is being trained and should be in place by next fall. An

Iraqi police force is assembled. And all but a handful of Saddam's

lieutenants have been captured. I think 45 out of 50 have been captured

and, of course, Saddam Hussein himself.

A provisional constitution has been drafted and ratified, just today,

I believe, by the Kurds, the Shiites, and the Sunis. This is a

tremendous step toward democracy and a tremendous accomplishment. So we

are on track to see a viable democracy in a country that has been a

major destabilizing influence in the Middle East for the last number of

years. We have had no attacks in the U.S. since 9-11.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I would just reiterate the fact that what I

and many of my colleagues have witnessed in Afghanistan and Iraq does

not seem to square with some of the conversation we have been hearing

on the political scene in recent months and recent weeks. So we think

that we have been doing a good job over there.

The soldiers, the troops that I met, have a tremendous sense of

mission, a great sense of accomplishment; and I think it is important

that they get the message that we are solidly behind them and solidly

behind this effort that is going on.