Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California, my

chairman of the House Committee on Armed Services, for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, in recent days many of my colleagues from the other side

of the aisle have come to the floor of the House to criticize the

President's policies on Afghanistan and Iraq. The rhetoric of the

minority side of the aisle is

paltry at best, and tonight I would like to try to set the record

straight.

The two chief arguments of the Democratic Party that I believe are

based on faulty logic are these: first, America has lost its focus on

the war on terrorism in Afghanistan; and, second, President Bush has

failed to build a true international coalition to fight this war.

Let us point to the administration's Afghan focus. First and

foremost, we in the Congress must make the distinction between less

cable news coverage and less administrative attention to the situation

in Afghanistan. Despite what many would have us believe, the success

stories coming out of Afghanistan are not only remarkable, but they far

outnumber the negative ones. Negative stories make the news, but the

positive ones are there as well. And native Afghans are returning to

their homeland in droves now that the country has been liberated from

the oppression of the Taliban. Just this year 200,000 Afghans have

returned home from Pakistan, bringing the total number to 2.2 million

from Pakistan since 2002. Also, recently the 1 millionth Afghan refugee

returned home from Iran. Many of these refugees are highly educated

teachers, health care providers, and community leaders that were thrown

out of the country by the Taliban.

I do not believe that this extraordinary number of Afghan citizens

would pick up and return home if they believed that Afghanistan was not

a safer place. To the contrary, they are returning home because their

country has been liberated from an oppressive regime and they are once

again free. The Afghan economy continues to power ahead; and previously

unheard-of opportunities are opening up, particularly, Mr. Speaker, for

Afghan women.

Let us talk about democratic development. Perhaps the most notable

development in Afghanistan is the progress of democracy. The country's

first post-war presidential election is scheduled for October of this

year. Voter registration efforts have exceeded, far exceeded,

expectations. Several months ago, officials predicted up to 5 million

registered voters, but according to the Joint Election Commission, more

than 9 million people, out of 10 million eligible voters, have

registered to vote, and 41.6 percent of them are women.

Furthermore, despite serious efforts to disrupt it, voter

registration continues at a pace of up to 125,000 people per day.

Afghan citizens are optimistic and excited by democracy, I think their

country is headed in the right direction, and I commend our President

for his efforts in this regard.

President Bush's efforts to build a true international coalition, let

us just talk about that for a little while. Few positive and accurate

statements have been made regarding the 32-nation United States-British

led coalition in Iraq or the 35-country security force in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, this has reinforced the falsehood that America is

isolated and hated on the world stage.

Well, to the contrary, in fighting the War on Terror, the United

States has assembled one of the greatest international coalitions this

world has ever seen. The coalition in Iraq includes 21 nations from

Europe and nine from Asia and Australia. Twelve of the 25 members of

the European Union are represented. Sixteen of the 26 NATO member

States are represented as well.

Let us recall that the decision to go to war in Iraq was undertaken

only after years, years, of negotiations with the UN Security Council

and no less than 17 failed resolutions.

There is broad political support internationally for United States

aims and objectives in Iraq, as confirmed by the unanimously-passed UN

Security Council Resolution 1546 which endorses the return of full

sovereignty to Iraq and its interim government; sets out the role of

the United Nations; and outlines the relationship between the new Iraqi

government and the multinational force in the country after the end of

the occupation by the CPA, the Coalition Provisional Authority, on May

28.

Furthermore, the United States has spearheaded a huge international

effort to reconstruct Iraq and to negotiate forgiveness of the

country's massive debts.

I am concerned that a failure to properly account for the reality of

international coalition efforts strengthens all of this anti-American

sentiment abroad and diminishes the sacrifices and the contributions

that our allies are making in the war on terror.

Mr. Speaker, with the aid of the international coalition, millions of

people have been liberated, 170 newspapers are now being published, new

modern power plants are being built, 64,000 secondary school teachers

have been trained and some 5,000 school principals and administrators.

More than 8.7 million textbooks have been printed and distributed

throughout Iraq. Coalition forces have rehabilitated almost 2,500

schools, 22 universities and 43 technical institutes and colleges are

open today. All 240 hospitals and more than 1,200 health clinics are

open for business.

Healthcare spending in Iraq has actually increased 30 times over its

pre-war levels and children, listen to this, are receiving crucial

vaccinations for the first time ever. Over 5 million children have been

immunized for measles, mumps and rubella.

Mr. Speaker, this is just a handful of the good that this coalition

has brought to the people of Iraq. It is a coalition that was forged

and preserved by our President, and I believe that it is fundamentally

wrong to diminish the achievements of this coalition.

Furthermore, I hope that the rhetoric of the minority party would not

dishearten brave citizens of the 32 other nations that are giving of

their talent, their time, and, yes, their treasure to do what they

think is right in defending the freedom and interests of the people of

Iraq and Afghanistan.

I yield back to the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, and

I thank him for giving me a little time to talk about all the good that

is going on in Iraq and Afghanistan. We need to continue to bring that

to the attention of our colleagues and the American people.

If the gentleman will yield further, I thank the

chairman.

Mr. Speaker, what the chairman was just saying is just so true. It

came home to me in a big and tragic way in this past week. I am a

graduate of the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. The

president of the student body just a couple of years ago at Georgia

Tech, my alma mater, a young first lieutenant, Tyler Brown, was killed

leading his troops in a firefight in Iraq.

He was an outstanding young man. Everybody said that one day Tyler

would surely become President. I do not know about that, but I know

that his mom and dad and his older brother Brent are suffering deeply

now, as much as a person could possibly suffer, over the tragic loss of

their son and brother.

As the chairman says, Mr. Speaker, you cannot support the troops out

of one side of your mouth and criticize them out of the other. This is

the one thing that this family, this Brown family, has to hold on to

for the rest of their lives, to know that Tyler, their son, who had

such great potential, who gave his life for this country, killed in

action, was not killed in vain.

I really appreciate the chairman, Mr. Speaker, bringing that out

tonight, because you cannot be for the troops and against them. You

cannot have it both ways.

I just felt like I needed to make that statement. I appreciate the

chairman giving me the additional time to do that.