Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the tone and the statement of our

colleague who just completed his hour and was talking about what our

country can do when we pull together. Over the next hour, I believe

that several Members of the Republican Conference here in the House of

Representatives will come down and share their perspectives gained,

many of them from physically going to Iraq or Afghanistan, or both,

during the recent August district work period when Members were back in

their district and allowed to travel to give firsthand accounts of what

they learned and their meetings with General Petraeus and Ambassador

Crocker and others, and a real up-to-date report on the situation in

Iraq.

But I do agree with the gentleman in his closing comments that we

must as a Nation take ownership again of certain things not even in a

bipartisan way but in a nonpartisan way because these are America's

problems. They are not Republican or Democratic problems. And frankly,

as much as some people would like to say it or believe it or use it for

political purposes, this is not President Bush's war; this is America's

fight. President Bush and Vice President Cheney will be gone in just a

little over a year. The problems will not go away. The threats will

still be here. The challenges of this generation to answer our

patriotic call to this Nation, to answer our responsibility in

sacrifice and service will continue, I believe, for some time.

I did not go to Iraq in August, but my nephew did. Specialist Jeffrey

Watts is now serving his country as a soldier in Iraq for the next 15

months as part of the 1-181st Field Artillery Brigade. I heard the

gentleman from Minnesota talk about the deployments. What I was

fascinated by when I was with the 1-181st earlier this summer as they

shipped out to Fort Bliss to train to go to Iraq, is how many members

of the 1-181st, and this is a National Guard unit, also deployed with

the 278th from our Tennessee National Guard a year and a half ago and

came back and redeployed with the 1-181st. They didn't have to but did;

and how many vice versa went before, many of them because they are

volunteering to serve their country in harm's way. In harm's way, big

harm's way, because they love the opportunity to serve their country.

They are incredibly selfless patriots of the highest order, and I do

think this House comes together in praise of these valiant Americans

who understand that freedom is not free and that somebody has to stand

between a real threat and our civilian population, and that is what

they are doing.

General Petraeus will be here next Monday with Ambassador Crocker to

give us an update. Everybody is anticipating that, and you have this

review and that review and these stats and those stats. And even the

Government Accountability Office is heavily involved, as if they

somehow supervise the Pentagon. But I think it is important for us all

to prepare to listen objectively next Monday because I think you are

hearing in a bipartisan way, Members like the gentleman from Washington

State from the Democratic side who recently came back and clearly said

much progress has been made. This Petraeus plan is working.

The guy who understands this insurgency threat more than anyone in

our military and therefore anyone in the world is leading a new

approach in Iraq. And the report will come beginning next week. And if

we are objective, I think we will support his recommendations. If we

are not objective and we have a political bias or an agenda, we may

reject it.

Some of his words in anticipation of next week are already out. He

talks about the extraordinary progress in the Anbar Province. General

Petraeus says that was the result not of military actions certainly

alone, it was the result of really a political shift where the

population, led by the sheikhs of major tribes, decided to reject al

Qaeda and its Taliban-like ideological behavior and the extremist

behavior that they have come to associate with it.

He said: ``That is what brought the level of violence down so

dramatically, because al Qaeda no longer finds a hospitable place in

the Euphrates River valley the way it certainly did in the past. We

have been banging away at al Qaeda for years, but until we could hold

them off with the help of the local population and local volunteers,

those operations were never as meaningful as they have been in recent

months. That is what we are trying to do in other locations in Iraq.

That has also led to a rise in the detainee population over the last 6

months as more al Qaeda operatives have been caught. And while there is

always a concern that they will gain strength, the pool of potential

recruits has actually shrunk. Their sanctuaries have shrunk

considerably so they don't have the ease of locations and movements

where they are safe the way they were before. Clearly there is real

progress being made. War is an ugly thing. It is always an ugly thing.

It is not perfect, but great progress is being made.''

Now, I am going to take the time before I introduce the gentlelady

from Virginia and others that will come to read an opinion from a

German journalist about Iraq that was in the Wall Street Journal last

Monday and then submit it for the Record. Josef Joffee. He says:

``In contrast to President Bush's dark comparison between Iraq and

the bloody aftermath of the Vietnam War last week, there is another,

comforting version of the Vietnam analogy that gained currency among

policymakers and pundits. It goes something like this:

``After that last helicopter took off from the U.S. Embassy in Saigon

32 years ago, the nasty strategic consequences then predicted did not

in fact materialize. The `dominoes' did not fall. The Russians and

Chinese did not take over, and America remained number one in Southeast

Asia and in the world.

``But alas, cut-and-run from Iraq will not have the same

serendipitous aftermath, because Iraq is not at all like Vietnam.

``Unlike Iraq, Vietnam was a peripheral arena of the Cold War.

Strategic resources like oil were not at stake and neither were bases.

In the global hierarchy of power, Vietnam was a pawn, not a pillar, and

the decisive battle lines at the time were drawn in Europe, not in

Southeast Asia.

``The Middle East, by contrast, was always the `elephant path of

history' as Israel's fabled defense minister, Moshe Dayan, put it.

Legions of conquerors have marched up and down the Levant, and from

Alexander's Macedonia all of the way to India. Other prominent visitors

were Julius Caesar, Napoleon and the German Wehrmact.

``This is not just ancient history. Today, the great Middle East is a

caldron even Macbeth's witches would be terrified to touch. The world's

worst political and religious pathologies, combined with oil and gas,

terrorism and nuclear ambitions.

``In short, unlike yesterday's Vietnam, the greater Middle East is

the central strategic arena of the 21st century, as Europe was in the

20th century. This is where three continents--Europe, Asia and Africa--

are joined. So let's take a moment to think about what would happen

once that last Black Hawk took off from the Baghdad International

Airport.

``Here is a short list. Iran advances to No. 1, completing its

nuclear arms program undeterred and unhindered. America's cowed Sunni

allies--Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the oil-rich Gulfies--are drawn into the

Khomeinist orbit.

``You might ask: Wouldn't they converge into a mighty anti-Tehran

alliance instead? Think again. The local players have never managed to

establish a regional balance of power; it was always outsiders--first

Britain, then the U.S.--who chastened the malfeasants and blocked anti-

Western intruders like Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia.

``With the U.S. gone from Iraq, emboldened jihadi forces shift to

Afghanistan and turn it again into a bastion of Terror International.

Syria reclaims Lebanon, which it has always labeled as a part of `Great

Syria.' Hezbollah and Hamas, both funded and equipped by Tehran, resume

their war against Israel. Russia, extruded from the Middle East by

adroit Kissingerian diplomacy in the 1970s, rebuilds its anti-Western

alliances. In Iraq, the war escalates, unleashing even more torrents of

refugees and provoking outside intervention, if not partition.

``Now, let's look beyond the region. The Europeans will be the first

to revise their romantic notions of multipolarity, or world governance

by committee. For worse than an overbearing, in-your-face America is a

weakened and demoralized one. Shall Vladimir Putin's Russia acquire a

controlling stake? This ruthlessly revisionist power wants revenge for

its post-Gorbachev humiliation, not responsibility.

``China with its fabulous riches? The Middle Kingdom is still happily

counting its currency surpluses as it pretties up for the Olympics, but

watch its next play if the U.S. quits the highest stakes game in Iraq.

The message from Beijing might well read: `Move over America, the

Western Pacific, as you call it, is our lake.'

``Europe? It is wealthy, populous and well-ordered. But strategic

players, those 27 member-states of the E.U. are not. They cannot pacify

the Middle East, stop the Iranian bomb, or keep Mr. Putin from wielding

gas pipelines as tools of `persuasion.' When the Europeans did wade

into the fray, as in the Balkan wars of the 1990s, they let the U.S.

Air Force go first.

``Now the upside. The U.S. may have spent piles of chips foolishly,

but it is still the richest player at the global gaming table. In the

Bush years, the U.S. may have squandered tons of political capital, but

then the rest of the world is not exactly making up for the shortfall.

``Nor has the U.S. become a `dispensable nation.' That is the most

remarkable truth in these trying times. Its enemies from al Qaeda to

Iran--and its rivals from Russia to China--can disrupt and defy, but

they cannot build and lead.

``For all the damage to Washington's reputation, nothing of great

import can be achieved without, let alone against, the United States.

Can Moscow and Beijing bring peace to Palestine? Or mend a global

financial system battered by the subprime crisis? Where are the central

banks of Russia and China?

``The Bush presidency will soon be on the way out, but America is

not. This truth has recently begun to sink in among the major

Democratic contenders. Listen to Hillary Clinton who would leave

`residual forces' to fight terrorism. Or to Barack Obama, who would

stay in Iraq with an as-yet-unspecified force. Even the most leftist of

them all, John Edwards, would keep troops around to stop genocide in

Iraq or to prevent violence from spilling over into the neighborhood.

And no wonder, for it might be one of them who will have to deal with

the bitter aftermath if the U.S. slinks out of Iraq.

``These realists have it right. Withdrawal cannot serve America's

interests on the day after tomorrow.

Friends and foes will ask: If this superpower doesn't care about the

world's central and most dangerous stage, what will it care about?

``America's allies will look for insurance elsewhere. And the others

will muse: If the police won't stay in the most critical of

neighborhoods, why not break a few windows or just take over? The U.S.

as `Gulliver Unbound' may have stumbled during its `unipolar' moment.

But as giant with feet of clay, it will do worse and so will the rest

of the world.''

I think that says it pretty well from a German journalist about our

commitment in Iraq, what the stakes are, what will happen if we are to,

as our Democratic colleague said, precipitously withdraw from Iraq.

We all want our troops home. I want my nephew home, but not until it

is in our national interest for us to draw down troops on the timeline

that secures our liberty and protects our people and our place in the

world. And that is what is at stake.

I want to yield to the distinguished gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs.

Drake), a member of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her service to the

Commonwealth of Virginia and to this great Nation of ours on the Armed

Services Committee and for going and bringing us that unique insight.

As I prepare to yield to the gentleman from Georgia, let me say I

think part of the equation for the Congress in a responsible, objective

way in the days ahead is to remember that this is not all about Iraq.

It is about the bigger picture with the global threat of the jihadists,

the most radical elements of Islam, and the way that they are spreading

their influence around the world outside even of the Middle East. I

think we have to really understand that to know what the stakes are

associated with the precipitous withdrawal or anything that is

perceived to be a retreat.

These are real problems. It's easy to say, oh, George Bush got us

into this war with flawed intelligence. It's also easy to forget that

over half of the Democrats in the United States Senate voted to remove

Saddam Hussein by force and almost half the Democrats in the House of

Representatives voted to remove Saddam Hussein by force based on the

very same knowledge and understanding that the executive branch had

about what the threats were, and we made that decision as Americans.

It is really unfortunate today that decisions and responsibility for

those decisions now end up being peeled off as partisan issues instead

of, we do these things together, we stand together, we stand behind our

troops together, we stand behind their mission together.

We had Members like Ralph Hall of Texas come back and say to a person

the men and women in uniform told him while he was there that we should

stay and finish what we started and not leave until we can successfully

complete this mission. And you say, well, what is that and when will we

know? Objectively, you're getting that report and it's much more

positive than it was, and the stakes for leaving are incredibly high.

If you don't believe the influence of the radical Islamists around

the world, I would encourage you to read Mark Steyn's book, ``America

Alone,'' where he lays out what's happened in Europe and the influence

with the global sharia, which is a call to Islamic law, and the

intimidation and the threat around the world, or even this new book

called ``Alms for Jihad: Charity and Terrorism in the Islamic World,''

by J. Miller Burke. He wrote this book exposing the connection between

the Saudi royal family and terrorism through these charities that they

set up and funnel money.

It reminded me of the Oil-for-Food scandal at the United States where

Saddam Hussein corrupted the United Nations.

All of the corruption that exists through this radical effort,

because this book that lays all this out can't be bought today. It has

vanished from all of the Amazons. It has vanished from the availability

of Barnes & Noble to find the book. What happened to it?

Well, through intimidation and money, they have taken this

information out of circulation so the people can't see these

connections.

They literally tie him, this man, Sheikh Khalid bin Mahfouz, to the

charity that he set up to fund bin Laden with Saudi royal family money,

and then when they published the book, it vanished. You can't get it.

You can't go buy it.

Mark Steyn lays out, this is the kind of work that the radical Wahabi

sect, the al Qaeda operatives, are doing in the world. They have

infiltrated and corrupted, and we are like boiling frogs if we deny any

longer how this threat is overtaking the free world. America Alone's

premise is they've already got Europe and frankly Australia is really

the only nation standing with us like they need to.

This is a growing global imminent threat. If we pull out, it will

rapidly deteriorate in the world. Our credibility will be lost for

generations. We may never regain it. Those are the stakes. That's

bigger than Iraq. Iraq is one chapter in this long-term gener-

ational struggle for our freedom. The sooner we realize it, the better

we are.

I went and spoke to kids in schools in August, and they asked the

question about, well, Afghanistan and the Taliban attacked us, but

Saddam Hussein in Iraq didn't attack us. Why did we go there?

The lesson of history is Germany didn't attack us, either. Japan

attacked us. Germany didn't attack us. But did we ignore the threat of

Nazi Germany? No. Our men stormed the beaches of Omaha and liberated

Normandy and Omaha Beach, and liberated Europe, so that our way of life

could be preserved. Sometimes they forget that, but that's American

leadership. This is very, very similar to that.

Are we going to exert it in a world in what this editorial calls the

caldron, you know, of the worst political and religious pathology in

the history of the world in the Middle East? This is the central stage.

We cannot retreat from this without us really, really taking a global

hit.

The next president is going to inherit the responsibility of doing

this, of carrying this forward.

I want to yield to the statesman from Georgia, a physician, a healer,

a man with a great heart but a strong back, also a member of the Armed

Services Committee, Dr. Phil Gingrey.

That reminds me, today, yet another terrorist plot coming

out of Germany, preparing to attack our Air Force base in Germany and

soft targets of just public places in Germany where Americans are known

to hang out was foiled, thankfully. The German authorities were on top

of it.

That is a major, major terrorist attack again. We see this over and

over again, thankfully, you know. God has spared us, our intelligence

is working, we are listening. Because of FISA, we are able to listen to

foreign terrorists talk to each other. We've taken the precautions.

Then I have this theory that they don't want to strike us right now

because they don't want our country to pull back together again and be

resolute against this threat, so that those things, combined, have kept

our country secure and safe at home while we are fighting these

insurgents and these terrorists in the Middle East.

We're going to be fighting them somewhere. If it's not in Iraq, it's

going to be Somalia, Northern Africa. I can go through a list of the

troubling places in the world where we're going to face these kinds of

problems and activities, and there are 20 countries that are at risk

around the world for big-time terrorist actions like the Taliban came

out of Afghanistan, and we can either basically stand against this

threat today or face it globally and more at home tomorrow. That's not

a threat. It's reality. In Germany today it was proven again they are

trying to hit our targets wherever they are.

The lowest of the low who would attack your wounded and

injured.

I thank the gentleman for that commentary, especially the

update on the hearing today from the GAO and Mr. Walker.

I will be a little more pointed to tell you as the ranking member of

the appropriations subcommittee that funds the GAO, and funds Mr.

Walker's organization, that unfortunately many times, whether it is

government spending or oversight in Iraq, a lot of what happens in his

office revolves around him and not us.

It is all about him, and again today, it's all about him. He's the

only one that somehow can be unbiased, and he's the only one that can

do this. And there's a little kingdom over at the GAO and he's the

king. And we need to remember that and put it in perspective this week

before we hear from the absolute expert on counterinsurgency in modern

world history, David Petraeus, the best we can put in charge. He's the

best we can offer to this situation. And let's listen to him

objectively and not get caught up in an ego matter, frankly, involving

Mr. Walker.

And I yield to the gentleman from Colorado, a distinguished member of

our Veterans' Affairs Committee, a relatively new Member, but a very

experienced and seasoned Member, Doug Lamborn.

I thank the gentleman from Missouri and his distinguished

leadership as the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee.

Let me say, before introducing the gentleman from Texas, one of the

biggest changes that I see, not just in Iraq, but globally, is that

finally moderate Muslims are standing up against the radicals. We're

seeing that in country, we're seeing that in other parts of the world.

Up until a few months ago when they saw American resolve coming

forward, they literally were so afraid and intimidated and harassed,

and the radicals were seizing the moment.

Now, finally, and let me tell you, because of the sheer numbers, if

we're ever going to really permanently throw this threat back, the

moderate people in Islam have to lead and help us, and that's beginning

to happen.

A gentleman who's been to Iraq six times, Dr. Burgess from Texas,

another physician, a healer, a member of the Commerce Committee with

extraordinary perspective from six separate visits to Iraq in country.

I yield him such time as he may consume, hoping to get the other

gentleman from Texas in at some point in the next 7 minutes.