Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Tennessee, Zach

Wamp, for, first of all, conducting this special order hour, leadership

hour on the Republican side, and for allowing me and my colleague and

great friend from Virginia, Thelma Drake, for being part of that. Doug

Lamborn, the gentleman from Colorado, I think, has joined us.

Mr. Speaker, I was on the trip with Thelma Drake from Virginia when

we visited Iraq and Afghanistan, and I am not going to repeat

everything that she said, but I want my colleagues to know that this

was my fourth trip to Iraq, my first opportunity to go to Afghanistan.

But this was a necessity that I go this fourth time. I think some 40

or 50 Members of the Congress during the so-called August recess spent

5 to 7 days in the Middle East and the combat zone in 120-degree

weather.

Those of us on the Armed Services Committee, I am sure, felt duty

bound to do this, particularly as we approach the report from General

Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker that's going to be delivered to the

House on next Monday, September 10.

I have been four times, but this was the most meaningful visit,

because I came to a realization, really, actually, it emboldened my

feeling that we need to give victory a chance. Again, I want to thank

Zach Wamp, the gentleman from Tennessee, for the passion that he brings

to this issue. I thought he was just an expert on energy, but he is

also an expert on national defense, more important, the global war on

terror, as he so passionately explains this issue.

I was on the floor last night during some of our special order time,

5-minute speeches and the two sides, the Democratic majority has an

hour and the Republican minority has an hour. I heard one of my

colleagues on the other side of the aisle, a gentleman from Maryland,

talking about losing a soldier, a 22-year-old brave patriot in his

district, and he talked with the mom and was trying to, of course,

console her.

The gentleman said on the floor last night, you know, it was sort of

ironic, the mom of the fallen soldier said, isn't it ironic, I am here

planning my son's

funeral and the Commander in Chief is planning a wedding.

That's not the kind of commentary that we need on the floor of this

House to suggest that the Commander in Chief doesn't care, that he has

got his head in the sand and that each and every one of these 3,700 or

so KIAs and 18,000 of our best and bravest that have sustained, in some

instances, massive injuries, if you don't think that the Commander in

Chief goes to bed every night with this on his heart, then you are just

flat wrong.

I think the gentleman, on more reflection, would agree with what I am

saying. This President cares. This Commander in Chief cares. He wants

to give victory a chance.

It's not a matter of staying the course and same old same old, the

Iraq Study Group, the gentleman from Indiana, the long-serving

distinguished Democrat, 37 years in this body, and Ambassador Baker,

Secretary Baker, served under three Republican Presidents, you have got

two people that made some suggestions. One of the main suggestions that

they made was we need a surge, we need more troops, especially in and

around Baghdad, and those four provinces, where all of the violence,

most of the violence, 95 percent of it, is occurring. This is exactly

what the President responded to.

What did we hear from our friends on the other side of the aisle? Oh,

well, you know, too little, too late.

Yet, you know, 3 or 4 years ago it was, well, you're not putting

enough troops in there to do the job, you didn't listen to General

Shinseki, it's a constant pulling the rug out from under the combatant

commanders, and we see 435 people that want to be Commander in Chief.

It just doesn't work that way.

In the Democratic special hour last night, after we talked about our

experience in Iraq and these recent trips, the team on the Democratic

side said, you know, we can't afford to spend this money. We've almost

spent $1 trillion trying to win this global war on terror, and we need

to be spending this money to repair bridges, to give more money to the

gulf coast, to maybe even give more money than a 300 percent increase

in the SCHIP program to cover every man, woman and child from cradle-

to-grave with universal health care.

Even if I were for some of those things, I will tell you this, you

spend that money on those things, and you don't protect our people from

global terrorism, then you will see, in a New York minute, how quick

that money would go down the toilet as these people blow up this

infrastructure, just like they did 9/11, almost 6 years ago now, and

killed 3,300, almost the same number, that we have lost in Iraq and

Afghanistan over a 4-year period. They killed them within a period of

45 minutes.

I am so glad the gentleman brought that up, because what

he is talking about, and I commend to all my colleagues, read the

article, these were three, in one case, I think, a citizen of Germany,

maybe of Islamic descent, but a German citizen, and not only were they

planning on attacking Frankfurt, where most people fly into when they

go into Western Europe, certainly from this country, but also, and I

know the gentleman is aware of this, their plan was to attack Ramstein

Air Force Base and the Landstuhl European Army Medical Center where

every one of these troops, our troops, that are injured so severely,

and our great physicians on the battlefield are able to save their

lives to get them through Ramstein Air Force Base to that Landstuhl

Army Medical Center there just a few miles away, and that's what they

were going to attack.

The lowest of the low.

Of course, I know we want to yield to our friend from Colorado, and

we will hear from him in just a second, but as I conclude my remarks, I

just want to say, and Mrs. Thelma Drake, the gentlewoman from Virginia

mentioned this a little earlier, we had a report today in the House

Armed Services Committee, a report that was requested by Congress in

our last emergency supplemental, from the Government Accountability

Office, the GAO, on these benchmarks, and the Comptroller General

talked about the progress. Really, he talked mainly about lack of

progress, and it was ironic that even though several of those

benchmarks, we had made some progress, he pretty much gave the Iraqi

government a failing report card.

I think that is disappointing here, just a matter of a few days prior

to General Petraeus' report.

He even suggested that while General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker

are highly professional and we would get a professional report from

them, we would not get an unbiased report. The only unbiased report was

coming from him and from the Government Accountability Office.

I suggested to him, during that hearing, you know, you might be

unbiased, but your ability to interpret what you see on the ground

certainly militarily may not come even close to General Petraeus and

Ambassador Crocker. So let's wait for the report, let's give victory a

chance. That's what I want to say to all my colleagues. Let's button

our lips for the rest of this week, and let's see what the report says.

I would suggest that the President is going to listen to General

Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, and I would suggest that yes, indeed,

the Iraqi government is making progress, that they are not making as

fast of progress as we would hope, but we would continue to put

pressure on them, but let's give victory a chance.