Mr. Speaker, it is perhaps difficult for some to

comprehend the extent of our successes in Iraq because they are focused

on isolated incidents rather than looking at the totality of our

efforts. So to fully grasp how far Iraq has come, it is necessary to

take stock of these successes.

My stepson, Doug Lehtinen, and his fiance, Lindsay Nelson, are

serving in Iraq right now. They are marine officers flying F-18s along

the Syrian border. They know that the security component of our efforts

in Iraq is the cornerstone for our mission for victory.

Iraqis are playing an ever-increasing role for providing for their

own security. The Iraqi army and police forces are growing larger and

are better trained and they are more effective than ever. The Iraqi

army and security forces grew from just one operational battalion in

July 2004 to more than 120 today. Many critics note that only one

battalion is rated at what the U.S. Army categorizes as a level one,

fully independent degree of operability. However, over 40 are at level

two, which are capable of fighting, with some support, usually just

logistics or artillery support from our coalition forces.

All of these units are patrolling their own areas of operations, and

the cities of Najaf and Mosul are now patrolled exclusively by Iraqi

security forces, as are large portions of the city of Baghdad. And

there are also roughly 80 battalions, both police and military,

identified as category three and are currently fighting alongside our

U.S. and coalition forces.

As a result, the United States military recently transferred more

than two dozen U.S. established bases to Iraqi control. In addition,

there are now currently 25,000 Iraqi special police officers who can

conduct combat and commando operations as well as routine policing

duties. Also, there are 75,000 Iraqi police officers trained and

equipped.

And looking to the future, Mr. Speaker, the current plans include

establishing 10 Iraqi army infantry divisions. That is 160,000

soldiers, 135,000 regular police officers, 9,000 border police, in

addition to the current force of 18,000, and 3,000 additional highway

patrol officers in addition to the current level of 3,000, by the year

2007.

Today, thousands of young Iraqis are volunteering, volunteering for

service, and they are training to become soldiers and police officers

at several facilities throughout the country of Iraq. As a result, over

225,000 Iraqi soldiers and police officers will be available to

provide security for Iraq's nationwide election in just under 2 weeks.

Yes, the third successful election which will take place in just a few

days.

Today, Iraqi security forces are strong enough to garrison and

control cleared areas, as recently illustrated in the leading role

taken by the Iraqis in the successful September 2005 offensive in Tal

Afar. Both U.S. and Iraqi forces have enjoyed additional successes in

eliminating insurgent strongholds in Fallujah, in Mosul, in Najaf, in

Samara, and in many other smaller towns along the Syrian border.

The increasing effectiveness of the Iraqi security forces has

inspired optimism among the Iraqi people, and this is reflected in the

growing number of intelligence tips from Iraqi civilians. According to

reports in March 2005, Iraqi and coalition forces received 483

intelligence tips from Iraqi citizens. This figure rose to 3,300 in

August and to more than 4,700 in September. This has translated into

further public confidence in the security situation in Iraq.

Simultaneously, the increasing effectiveness of the Iraqi security

forces has caused fear and derision within our enemies' ranks.

Significant success securing the Syrian border, previously a sieve for

Iraqi and foreign insurgents, has made it tougher for Syrian-based

insurgents to orchestrate or support attacks in Iraq. As a result,

homicide bombings by Islamic jihadists has reportedly been down 30

percent since the October constitutional referendum.

So the military and the security components of the strategy are laid

out in the national strategy for victory in Iraq, as stated by the

President, and it is due to the commitment of fighting men and women

like my stepson, Doug, and his fiance, but also thanks to the brave men

and women of the Iraqi security forces who continue to fight for their

emerging democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to look at the situation in Iraq,

look at the threat posed by Iraq under the regime of Saddam Hussein,

then look at Iraq today. There is no question that we are succeeding.