Mr. Speaker, I thank the Speaker for recognizing me for

this hour. We are up here this evening because I have had a chance to

go to Iraq recently, and some of the things that I have heard in the

House just a few minutes ago don't ring up with what I observed when I

was in Iraq.

But I want to start off by saying this: When I went back home this

past month, all over my district the main thing I heard from the people

on Iraq, get the politics out of it and just tell us the truth of what

you know and let us try to figure it all out together, and why don't we

try to figure this out together instead of thinking about who is going

to win the next election or who is going to get the next advantage in

the political process. I kept hearing that over and over.

I want to get up, and some of my colleagues tonight are going to talk

about what they know. Some of them have a lot more wisdom than I do

because they have been there more times than I have and have had more

experiences.

My experience is relatively limited. I have been to Iraq four times

since I have been in Congress, the last time being late in the month of

July. I went on a long weekend to Iraq. So I was there the first time

right after we caught Saddam Hussein. The second time I was there was

just before the elections took place. The third time was May a year ago

when we were pondering what to do and there was discussion of Petraeus

having a plan. And then recently this July.

I can tell you that the difference between May and July is the

difference between daylight and dark as far as the comments that I

received from American fighting men and women and from Iraqis that I

visited with while I was there for what was just a real long weekend.

Soldiers are always proud of their mission and accept their mission,

and they do their mission and duty and we should always be proud of

them. But you didn't hear the kind of comments that we have heard now

about the enthusiasm that our soldiers have for the fact that ordinary

Iraqi citizens, as we say in baseball, are stepping up to the plate and

they are taking a swing, and that swing is helping our soldiers and our

marines as they do their duty to try to eliminate al Qaeda from being

that thorn in the side of Iraqi freedom that is causing the ultimate

cause of all of this violence that is going on in Iraq.

Someone here tonight said there is brazen political maneuvers. Well,

what I am saying has nothing to do with politics. It has to do with the

fact that within my district, I have 52,000 soldiers who reside within

my district, all of whom have been deployed at least once and some as

many as three times in Iraq. I have the largest military facility that

exists in the United States, Fort Hood.

Our guys told us a lot of good news, and I will report the bad news.

The bad news they told us is that 15 months is tough and it is hard on

their families and they hope we can get this mission done so we don't

have to continue 15-month rotations.

So I don't come back just preaching good news. Our military, our

soldiers don't like the 15-month rotation, but they do their duty. But

time and time again I had soldiers tell me: Man, whatever you do, don't

pull the rug out from under us just as we are starting to see daylight.

We are committed in blood, sweat and tears over here, and the Nation

has committed its resources and we are seeing the light at the end of

the tunnel. Don't pull out the rug now. If you do, don't ask me to come

back when this place goes to hell in a handbasket. That is a quote from

a sergeant.

We have to think about this. We have big decisions to make this fall.

General Petraeus is going to come over here, and he will tell us the

truth about what is going on, and I don't think it is all going to be a

beautiful, rosy picture. But I do think he is going to tell you what

ordinary soldiers and ordinary marines told me, and that is, as

compared to 6 to 9 months ago, it is substantially better. It has to do

with the fact that we now have the necessary troops on the ground.

I would like to correct an error that a general asked me to correct.

The surge did not start in February of this year. The surge was

announced. The surge started the second week in July of this year. That

is when the entire 30,000-soldier contingency was in Iraq, and at that

point in time the plan began to be executed.

But the idea that we were building up troops brought good news. The

surge is now less than 6 weeks old. That's the truth about what the

surge is. In fact, one of the people who is in charge of bringing these

additional forces to Iraq told me, he said: You know, I hear you are

having votes to pull out in 2 weeks or 2 months. Well, just tell

somebody it took us a hard 6 months to get 30,000 soldiers over here,

and if you think you can move 160,000 out of here in 120 days, you have

lost your mind. It can't be done.

The reality of that war is they come over there on ships, and just

like they did in the Second World War, they train before they go in,

and when they are ready, they go in. And the whole 30,000 finally

arrived in July.

So the picture, as I see it, is good news because of Iraqi

involvement, and we will talk some more about that. Right now I would

like to recognize Chris Shays, my colleague who has probably been to

Iraq more than any Member of this Congress. Congressman Shays, do you

want to share your feelings.

Well, I thank my colleague for those very, very

intelligent comments and for your experience. How many trips have you

made?

Eighteen times. Well, my little four don't sound like a

whole lot.

Well, that's true. I want to thank you and I'm sure our

soldiers want to thank you, too.

The trip that I was on, I had some wonderful Members of Congress who

are here. A couple of them are here tonight. My friend Mr. Davis from

Tennessee was there with us, and I believe that was his first trip to

Iraq. I would like to yield to Mr. Davis.

I thank my colleague from Tennessee. We had a great

experience on that trip.

One of my good buddies up here and colleagues is Phil Gingrey from

Georgia. Congressman Gingrey has a more recent trip than the trip I was

on in July. I believe Congressman Gingrey just got back a couple weeks

ago.

So he will tell us about his experience on a trip that took place

early in August and let him tell us what he saw and how he feels about

things.

I told everybody about that trip to Iraq. The man who led

that trip to Iraq is here, Congressman Mike Burgess, one of my

classmates, came into Congress with me. He is from the great State of

Texas, the northern part of our State, from the Dallas-Ft. Worth-Denton

area.

Congressman Burgess was the leader of our group that went over for

our long weekend. Congressman Burgess may tell us about the trip and

has pictures to look at.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, as I was listening to

everybody talk here and listening to people talk earlier today, I get

struck by the history of this Chamber. And as I was sitting here, I

wondered how often this debate had occurred during my lifetime or did

it occur during my lifetime. I would like to think I am a student of

history, but I will admit that my concentration on history from the end

of the Second World War until I was in high school, there is a gap

there where it is only kind of the history of me and not the history of

the United States. So I don't know a lot about it, but I was thinking

the Second World War in Europe ended in 1944. Germany was divided into

zones, I believe, until 1952. So we actually were the government of a

zone, as were Britain and

France, from 1944 to 1952. I wonder if this debate took place in this

Congress during that period of time: Bring our troops home. Why don't

those people stand up a government over there? Why can't they get their

act together? I wonder if that debate took place. I don't know. I might

go look it up and try to find out.

Japan we defeated in 1945, unconditional surrender. And yet MacArthur

established the occupation of Japan and, in fact, was heavily

criticized when the Korean War broke out for still being the czar of

Japan. And occupation forces remained in Japan until some time in the

mid 1950s. I wonder if that debate went on about Japan. The last time I

checked, which was the day before yesterday when I was talking to some

soldiers at Fort Hood, we still have troops in Korea, and that war

technically ended in 1954 I believe it was, 1952 or 1954, and we still

have troops there. And I don't know if during the 1950s we had debates

about why can't those people get their act together? Why do we have to

defend that country? Why do we have to defend them? I don't hear that

debate anymore, and there are still American soldiers standing watch in

Korea.

I am not saying that we are going to occupy for this period of time,

but where is our commitment to the commitment that our soldiers have

given us? That deeply concerns me. I worry about it. And I can tell you

our fighting men and women worry about it too.

So I guess that is why we get up here on the floor of the House and

we want to let the American people know what we saw and what we heard

and what we experienced. And I know the fighting generation that are

living today; those soldiers are a great generation. The question is,

will we be also ranked as a great generation, the people back home, for

standing behind this great generation as they have done an outstanding

job in defeating our enemy.