Let me respectfully point out we call that the Dallas-

Ft. Worth area back where I come from.

I am going to reiterate many of the points that have already been

made tonight. It's hard to not cover ground that's already been

covered.

This was my sixth trip to the country of Iraq. I was there a year

ago. We went in July, toward the end of July, a weekend trip, as Mr.

Carter already pointed out. I didn't know it was possible to do a

weekend trip to Baghdad but, indeed, it is if the circumstances are

correct.

The year before I was there and heard about some of the things that

were happening in a hospital, a little town called Ramadi. General

Peter Chiarelli, as I recall, said, I am not sure what this means and

probably too early to talk about it, but it seems as if we have been

invited into the hospital, which was one of the main headquarters of

the insurgents, the Sunni insurgents there in Ramadi, and the building

was turned over without firing a shot.

A year later, the situation is completely reversed, and Ramadi was so

stable that not only could we talk about visiting it, we, indeed, did

visit. It is that trip that really embodies the success that has

occurred and, largely, the success that has occurred since beginning

the additional troop strength in February and, of course, the ascension

of General David Petraeus to be the commander of the forces in Iraq.

The fact is, I don't think you can deny that significant successes

have been made and they continue to occur on an ongoing basis,

returning control of the country to the Iraqi Government and to its

people and delivering it out of the hands of criminals and murderers.

But I don't think any of us would disagree. It's still a very dangerous

situation and the sacrifice that's being made by all participants in

the country is very, very real.

It is my opinion, and I spoke on the floor of this House right before

we had the decision to support the President on the surge, it is my

opinion that it is in America's broad interest that we be successful in

this endeavor. It is also my opinion that it is, indeed, possible for

us to be successful.

Nothing that I saw on this trip would discourage me from either one

of those points. It is my opinion that a stable country in Iraq, with a

representational government that's able to act as a partner in peace in

the Middle East, would be vastly preferable to a lawless land ruled by

terrorists, criminals, with sources and training capabilities where

they would be able to expand their activities, not just to other areas

of Iraq but, indeed, to other areas of the Middle East and, indeed, to

other areas of the world.

Almost without question, the divergent future, the potential

divergent future of that country was on the minds of almost everyone we

encountered during that very brief 2-day trip. Certainly America's

interest is going to be best served by stability in the country and

their active participation in quieting a very troubled region.

In July of 2006, there was no way that we could have taken a

congressional delegation into Ramadi. It would have been too dangerous,

and we would have been turned down had we asked. But this time we got

off of the C-130 in Baghdad and loaded onto the Black Hawk helicopters,

and we were taken to Ramadi.

We met with the soldiers there. We met with the soldiers of the II

Marine Expeditionary Force, which are part of the surge. General

Gaston, who I believe is on the pictures with President Bush over the

weekend, was part of that briefing that we had there, met the mayor,

met the health minister.

The mayor of Ramadi sounded like a mayor in any one of the 60 cities

that are in my district. He said, I need more Federal money. By the

way, if you come back and visit next year, this place is really going

to be something, so plan on coming back and spending some money when

you get here. He sounded like a combination mayor and

chamber of commerce guy, but he really believed in what he was doing.

I guess, of all of the things that I didn't expect to find when I got

to Iraq this time, it was that slow building of the institutions of

local government, which previously had been lacking, that building of

the institutions of government at the local level, which heretofore I

had not witnessed on any of the trips that I had made to Iraq. That was

the thing that probably gives me the most hope for what the overall

future for that country may entail.

When we got to Ramadi, we had our briefings. We had our visits with

the health director and the mayor. And then we went downtown. We went

to an area that previously was involved in very, very heavy ground fire

and ground fighting for the control of that city.

Remember, Ramadi is a city about the size of Fort Worth, Texas. It's

about 400,000 to 500,000 people. It was designated to be the provincial

capitol of the resurgent caliphate in western Iraq.

Well, we walked through the market, and it looks like a very normal

market in a Middle Eastern country. And you can see the look on the

faces of the people there. They're curious about people walking through

their market. Clearly, we did not look like we were typical shoppers.

But you see the faces of the children there, inquisitive and friendly.

A lot of stuff available for sale there, much more than I would have

thought in an area that had been recently so hard pressed.

One of the very striking things to me again is the faces of the

children, very energetic, very engaged, very trusting. These two young

men came right up to us. I think they were interested in if we had any

pens or quarters. Clearly, the close association with the American

military has taught them a few things about life in this country.

But clearly, a very different picture on the street in Ramadi than

you would have encountered a year ago.

From a military perspective, there's no question that success has

been made and continues to be made on a near daily basis. The primary

enemy, which is al Qaeda in Iraq, has not only been beaten but they've

been vanquished every time there is an encounter. Al Qaeda has now

about three options: they can move, communicate, or shoot. And if they

do any one of those three things, they are met by our military, and

they are dispatched.

Because of the increased military presence of our troops in Iraq, the

confrontations are more frequent, and you see that reflected in

statistics coming out of that country.

From the government perspective, there's not a Sunday morning that

goes by that we don't hear someone complain about the government in

Iraq, and I'll do the same thing. It's astounding to me that a country

that young, a government that young can already have entrenched

bureaucracies that exist within it. Iraq has a very centralized

government.

But, again, I would stress the building up of the work that's going

on currently of that sort of bottom-up work of building governments

does seem to be a cause for some optimism.

Probably this conflict, unlike any other in our Nation's history,

there are data points which are distributed all over the map. And

anybody can take a handful of those data points and make whatever

conclusion, draw whatever conclusion they have in their mind to make.

It is going to take a lot more discipline for this body to look at the

trends, analyze the data trends, look at the trend lines. But that's a

discipline that we just have to undertake. There are people in the

field who are counting on us to be able to make that rational,

dispassionate assessment of trend lines; and it is the obligation of

Congress to follow through on that.

There have been two or three years of serious brutality at the hands

of al Qaeda, and this population now sees Americans as helpers and

protectors. The tribal leaders that originally feared that the

Americans would be occupiers quickly came to understand that the

Americans have no such interest, but the same could not be said for the

al Qaeda interests. Their clear intent was to hold territory for their

own purposes for the foreseeable future.

The point was made over and over again on our trip that there is no

easy, there is no overnight solution to the problems that confront us

in Iraq. Unfortunately, leadership cannot be bought, and it has to be

grown. It has to be part of an evolutionary change. But it can occur if

the right environment is provided and appropriate, but not indefinite,

time is given to develop those institutions of government.

Everything we have asked of our military they have delivered, they

have produced for us. What we have asked of the Iraqi Government is

still a work in progress, and we've set a pretty high bar. And it's a

much shorter time frame than even our own country had available to it.

I think of the Articles of Confederation that ultimately led up to

the Constitution. What if someone had said to us, time's up, and you've

just got to get it done?

With continued pushing on the Iraqi Government and the recognition

that there are cultural challenges before them, I am hopeful that it

can mature into a stable partner for peace in the Middle East.

My opinion, my conclusion is that our presence in Iraq is still

necessary. It's necessary for America's interests, not for Iraq's

interests. I've said, and I think everyone in our group said every time

we'd sit down with representatives from one of the ministries, you've

got to show some evidence of success. You've got to achieve some

benchmarks.

I think when we met with Dr. Sharistani, the oil minister, it's

probably most evident. They've got problems in trying to achieve these

benchmarks. Not every country that surrounds them is interested in Iraq

being successful. Yeah, we all know about Iran and their influence;

read more about it today. We all know about Syria and their influence.

But what about the Saudis? Do they have an interest in perhaps not

getting that oil revenue sharing law passed? Well, this was brought up

to us. It would have never occurred to me that this might be an

obstacle to getting that law passed and enacted, but apparently there

are some forces, and maybe even just some media forces within that

country that work in a detrimental way to that kind of progress. But

progress has to come and it has to be clearly evident for those on the

outside. We perhaps have asked them to achieve the impossible in such a

short time frame. But, again, many of us here tonight have made

multiple trips to Iraq. Every trip I've made, I have seen progress,

evidence of significant progress since the trip before. And I have no

doubt that that progress has continued since our trip there the latter

part of July.

Again, my opinion: it is in America's interest that we be successful.

And to answer the question, is success still a possibility, I don't

think there's any question after this last trip. The answer to that is

a resounding yes.

I'll yield back to the gentleman from Texas, and I truly appreciate

him calling this Special Order tonight.