Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Iowa for his

leadership on this issue, and how much we appreciate that leadership.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I stand tonight for our men and women in

uniform. And in my district, the men and women and families at Fort

Campbell, and also our Guardsmen and our Reservists, and all of those

that are deployed, how much we appreciate their sacrifice, how much we

appreciate, Mr. Speaker, the great work that they do in order to be

able to be certain that we preserve freedom, that we have the ability

for children in this Nation to know that they are going to grow up in

freedom.

This is so those children will have the ability to dream big dreams,

to look at the future with hope, with the expectancy of opportunities

that will come their way.

We do thank our men and women in uniform. And I thank them. I thank

this House today that approved a bill that will allow for a pay raise

for our military. We are grateful for that and for the actions of this

body.

I am so pleased to join you tonight as we turn our thoughts to Iraq

and what is happening in Afghanistan because those are centers and they

are battles in the war on terror. The war on terror is a global war.

When we talk about the war on terror, we are not talking about one

specific place or one specific battle. The global war on terror is

something that is localized right now in Iraq; but we do know that

while this is the battleground of today, while Afghanistan is the

battleground, while the Middle East is the breeding ground for much of

the terrorism that has been disbursed all across the globe, we know

that we have to look at this as a global war.

We have to know that this is going to be a long war. We have been

told that by our leaders. We have been attacked. We know that we were

attacked for two full decades before we stopped looking at terrorism as

an act of civil disobedience and we started responding to terrorism as

an act of war.

That seemed to all come to a head when we looked at Iraq, when we had

a very evil dictator who continued to defy U.N. resolutions, who

continued to just repeatedly snub the U.N. and snub the free world and

say, I can be the bully of the region if I want to. And that came to an

end after September 11.

We commend our men and women in uniform that have gone there to set

free, to set free a people, to begin stamping out terrorism and to be

certain that we are standing up, democracy and partners in democracy

that will yield a peace dividend for our children and our

grandchildren.

I appreciate that the gentleman from Iowa took a few moments to talk

about some of the women in Iraq and some of the women that have fought

so valiantly for freedom and for democracy and for liberty.

I have had the opportunity to work with our Iraqi Women's Caucus and

work with our Department of State, and stepped forward and helped to

mentor some of these women as they take those baby steps and then as

they lead in putting democracy in place.

You know, it is so amazing to talk to them and to read the e-mails

that they send to us as we seek to encourage them and their work and

their efforts. Some of the stories that they have told about atrocities

that they have lived through, how they watched the vicious nature of

Saddam's henchmen and how they would brutalize people, brutalize

families, and how these women have lived through that and have moved

forward to take that leadership role and to step forward and say, Do

not leave us now. Do not leave us now. We are on the right track. And

we know it looks messy, and we know it is going to be a long process

and we know this is not easy, but do not leave us.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but think when I have these conversations

with these women and when I see some of them, maybe they are missing a

finger, maybe there is something that is wrong, maybe they have

suffered pain and torture and agony and you can see it in their faces

and you can see it in their bodies, but in their spirit what you hear

is the desire to be certain that they have their shot at freedom. That

is what they want. They want the opportunity to live freely, to enjoy

the benefits of freedom. And I think that we have to keep that in mind

as we move forward.

One of the things we repeatedly hear and, of course, I know the

gentleman from Iowa is like me, we all want to see our troops come

home, come home victorious, and we would like to have them all come

home, but I think we have to keep in mind that there is not going to be

one specific event or one announced time where we say, all right, the

work is done, because this is a work in progress. It is a work in

progress, and we have seen tremendous progress. We have seen some

tremendous stepping back. We have seen some failures, but we are seeing

progress. And we are going to continue to see progress take place.

We have seen the elections in January of 2005, all the way to the

election in December of 2005. We have watched the formation of a new

government, and now we can look forward as they are putting in place a

permanent government. This is not a provisional government. There is a

government that will rule in that country. They will govern. They will

be making the laws, setting the laws, and at the same time we are

watching the Iraqi security forces train, develop the competencies that

they need in order to secure their nation and begin to stand up and

take charge.

It is exciting to see that type of progress take place. It is

exciting to see progress in Afghanistan. It is exciting to see that

there is that hope there, and it raises our concerns we have about the

rest of the Middle East, about Iran, about the areas that surround

there. And you know, Mr. Speaker, I think we have to keep in mind why

we do this, why we are there, why we are rooting out terrorism, why we

have rooted out a brutal dictator. Why we do this is because if we are

fighting there, we are not going to have to be fighting that over here.

How very important for us to keep that in mind.

Taking this battle to them, right there in the Middle East, in that

breeding ground of terrorism, taking the battle there helps us to do

our best to keep this Nation secure, to allow us to continue to be a

trustee of this great and wonderful legacy that we call freedom.

I want to thank the gentleman from Iowa for yielding. I want to thank

him for his excellent work that he continues to do to speak out to

support our men and women in uniform and to support our troops with the

good work that they are doing and always his good words in protecting

the cause of freedom.

With that, I yield back to the gentleman.