I thank my friend from California and particularly I want

to thank him for his strong and wise leadership on national security

issues.

As the gentleman mentioned he and our colleague from Atlanta,

Georgia, Mr. Scott, and I co-founded the Democratic Study Group on

National Security Policy, which advocates for a long and smart

military, which believes in policy that are robust and visionary when

it comes to our national security.

I have the great honor, not just being a Member of Congress, but

serving on the House Armed Services Committee. And I was in Iraq just a

month ago. It was my second visit as a member of the Armed Services

Committee. And when I was there I had the sense that we were getting

close to finding al-Zarqawi. He was still on the loose but we were

getting closer, and I am glad that we finished the job. This is a guy

who relished beheadings. This is someone who enjoyed car bombings. This

is someone who killed Americans who killed, Sunnis, who killed Shi'ia,

who killed Kurds. And so I believe it is an important day and it is

good news that while we have many struggles ahead this one struggle no

longer exists.

But I think it is very important for us to focus on the future. While

I was in Iraq I had the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Maliki

and President Talabani and General Casey and his troops. All of those

people were involved and should take credit for what happened today.

The questioning now faces what is next. The gentleman talked about

our plan for Iraq. The fact that 2006 should

be a year of transition to full Iraqi sovereignty, that we need a

responsible redeployment of U.S. forces, that we need to promote Iraqi

political compromise to unite the country, encourage our allies to play

a constructive role, hold the Bush administration accountable. And

there is one more thing that we must do that I know my colleagues and I

agree completely on. And that is to make sure that our troops continue

to have everything they need, because despite the fact that al-Zarqawi

has been removed, there are going to be other al-Zarqawis in the world.

There are going it be others who enjoy beheadings and car bombings. And

for as long as long as they exist, we are going to need the

capabilities of meeting and defeating them.

That is why I was so distressed when my constituents woke up this

morning to this front page in our Long Island newspaper, Newsday. The

front page headline, ``Blood clot bandages, frontline shortage, some

troops calling home to ask for life saving dressings.''

By the way, I would say to my friends from Georgia and California,

this story is under a story about how Ann Coulter visited my district

having just attacked 9/11 widows as being witches and harpies. After

Ann Coulter attacked 9/11 widows, I have about a hundred of them in my

district, comes to my district and attacks them. Under that story is

this story about potential shortages of blood clot bandages.

Let me share with my colleagues what this story says. ``Despite Army

order that frontline medics get special clotting bandages, soldiers say

they're still needed.'' It begins with this lead. ``Nine months after

an Army order that all combat orders would get life saving clotting

bandages to curb bleeding deaths, some troops in Iraq are still calling

home, asking friends and families to supply them. Despite Army

assurances that there are plenty of bandages to go around. Soldiers

have written to say they have not found their way to all those on the

front lines, and the manufacturer under contract with the Army

acknowledged last week that early production problems may have spurred

a shortage.''

Now, let me be clear on this. We have been working with the Army and

we will continue to work closely with them. They are trying to get to

the bottom of this and that is their obligation. I appreciate their

responsiveness to this report. But we cannot afford continued reports

like this three years after the invasion.

It is unfair that Ms. Doreen Kenny, who lost her job, Jacob Fletcher,

in Iraq, one of the first Long Islanders to be killed in action, has to

have her photograph in this story with the quote, ``If I can prevent

one knock at the door of a military family, I will do all I can to

prevent them from living through the heartbreak I have had to live

through.''

Why is she in this story? Because Doreen Kenny, who lost her boy, is

mailing this critical medical equipment to our troops in Iraq. That is

not what she should be having to do right now.

So I know we will continue as Democrats to ensure that when we go to

war we do not go with the Army we have, as Secretary Rumsfeld said, but

with the supplies they need. That those of us who believe that we have

to draw a line against totalitarianism understand that we have to make

sure our supply lines are adequately equipped. That we cannot afford to

send soldiers into hostility and then read reports that they are

calling home asking for blood clotting bandages.

I want to thank the gentleman for his leadership. We will continue to

pursue this vitally important plan for Iraq, but I know that at the

centerpiece of those plans is the understanding that we have to protect

the protectors and defend the defenders, and that is what Democrats are

doing in the United States Congress today.

Well, I thank the gentleman for the question. You know,

every Member of Congress prides themselves on the work we do with

respect to veterans case work. I know in my district we have two people

devoted exclusively to trying to work with veterans, get them their

retroactive payment, get them their medals.

We secured over $2 million in my district in back payments for our

veterans, but those are Vietnam veterans. Some of these are World War

II veterans, Korean veterans. This country is just now catching up to

people who were in the military theater 40 years ago. Just catching up

now to those people.

Can you imagine what our situation is going to be where we now have a

multitude, a new generation of veterans coming back with post-traumatic

stress disorder and other very serious physical and psychological

problems, and we have to say to them we are sorry, we know we sent you

to the front, but now we have got to balance the budget on your backs

because we have run out of money? Just cannot do it as a result of the

fiscal policy of the past 6 years.

When the gentleman and I were elected, we had a $5.6 trillion

surplus. We could have paid for the war in Iraq and then paid for

health care for every single soldier that went, so that they did not

have to go without the potential of coagulant bandages. So when they

came home, they came home to a country that would take care of them.

Now, we have got an $8 trillion debt, and we have to make painful

cuts. The other side has forced us to cut back on those services,

forced veterans to dig deeper into their pockets.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, there is a lot

of talk by the administration about the global war on terror and

America's fight on the global war on terror. 133,000 of our troops are

fighting the global war on terror. They are the ones who have been made

to engage in the sacrifice. They are the ones who have been uprooted

from their families.

These two gentlemen on the front page of my daily newspaper, they are

fighting the global war on terror. The rest of us are watching it on

television. America can do better than that. I refuse, and I know the

gentleman from California and the gentleman from Georgia should refuse

to be the first generation of Americans in history to say let everybody

else do it, we will just sit back and relax. We will pass a permanent

repeal of the death tax or the estate tax which may cost $300 billion,

and then have the temerity to tell these people on the front page of

Newsday, sorry, we cannot afford your supplies, we cannot afford to

take care of you when you come home. I do not want to be the first

generation of Americans to balance the budget on the backs of someone

who is on his back in this photograph.

We have an obligation if we are going to fight the Zarqawis of the

world, something I believe we should do, to make sure that those who

are doing the fighting are protected and make sacrifices at home that

save their lives abroad.

I spent some time this evening with the gentleman and

with one of our best generals, and he was telling the story of visiting

with a critically wounded soldier in a military hospital and walking

out with that soldier's mother. And the mother said, General, my son is

not sleeping at night. And the General said, well, of course he is not

sleeping at night, look what he has been through. She said, no,

General, he is not sleeping because he is up all night thinking about

the fact that his unit is still in Iraq and he is worried about them.

That is the sacrifice that we are talking about and the dedication

and the professionalism, and we have an obligation to those men and

women to protect them.

If the gentleman would allow me to make a concluding point. This

front page newspaper tells the story of contrast, and the same contrast

is played out on the floor of the House frequently. You have got this

front, top of the newspaper that says ``Ann the Ripper Brings Campaign

Against 9/11 Widows to Long Island,'' and then you have the rest of the

page devoted to the possibility of front-line shortages of critical

medical equipment. These guys get less so that Ann Coulter, who writes

a book calling 9/11 widows witches and harpies, who will make a lot of

money off the proceeds of that book, can get a bigger tax cut.

How is that fair in America today? How is that just? How does that do

justice to these people? It doesn't. We can do better. The Democrats

will do better. We understand the need to fight and to use hard power

around the world to fight totalitarianism and to fight terrorism, but

if you are going to take on the fight, you got to take it on with the

right supplies. And that is what we are about.