I want to thank my good friend and colleague for setting

aside this hour and giving us an opportunity to focus attention on the

circumstances in Iraq and the consequences of our response to the

attack of September 11, 2001.

This week we marked 5 years, and today 5 years and 3 days, since that

attack of September 11, 2001, against the World Trade Center, the

Pentagon, and Flight Number 93 that, as a result of the heroism of the

people on board, crashed into a field in Pennsylvania rather than into

this Capitol building on that particular day.

There is no question that people who were responsible for that attack

were brutal, devastating, and without conscience. However, the main

danger that has been focused on our country came about not as a result

of the attack but more as a result of the response of our government to

that attack.

We have seen, for example, that shortly after our invasion of

Afghanistan to upset the Taliban, which were housing the al Qaeda

network, after we had taken the Taliban out of power in Afghanistan and

chased the al Qaeda network out of Kabul and Kandahar, how this

administration stopped the pursuit of the main perpetrators of that

attack, the al Qaeda network and their principal leader, Osama bin

Laden. It was a conscious decision

made by this administration not to go after Osama bin Laden and,

therefore, not to capture him.

Now, obviously, one has to ask the question: Why? The only sensible

answer to that question is this: The administration did not want to

capture Osama bin Laden, the brains, the main perpetrator behind that

attack. Because if he had been captured, then the argument of the

administration that there was a connection between the attack of

September 11 and Iraq, and the need to invade Iraq, that argument would

essentially have evaporated. If Osama bin Laden had been captured,

there would have been no logical rationale for invading Iraq.