Mr. President, I rise to congratulate the people of Iraq

on writing another chapter in the history of their nation. After the

coalition forces toppled Saddam's oppressive regime, many believed it

would take years until the Iraqis would be in control of their

government apparatus. They were wrong. On June 28, 2004, the transfer

of power took place and Iraqis became the rulers of their nation. On

January 20, 2005, millions of people, including women, risked their

lives to choose the members of a temporary Parliament responsible for

drafting the new constitution. This past weekend, millions of Iraqis

lined up to cast their ballots in more than 6,000 polling places across

Iraq.

The Iraqi people's vision of a free and stable Iraq led them to an

important milestone--voting on a democratic Iraqi-written constitution.

Last weekend, through will and determination, more than 60 percent of

the eligible voters in Iraq chose to speak up against tyranny and

oppression--a higher percentage of voter turnout than in the 2004 U.S.

Presidential election.

What we saw in Iraq on October 15, 2005, proved that even those

oppressed for decades will peacefully choose their own future when

given a chance to participate in a fair and open electoral process.

There had been much speculation that a majority of Sunnis would

boycott the referendum. However, until the last few days before the

vote, leaders of the Shi'a and the Kurds worked relentlessly to

convince their Sunni countrymen and women to vote either for or against

the constitution. Their work came to fruition when millions of Sunnis

lined up to cast their ballots and decide the future of their country.

While many Sunnis voted against the proposed constitution, the

referendum sent a clear message that all Iraqis are willing to invest

in the democratic process.

By casting their ballots, millions of Iraqis also sent a strong

message against terrorism. Ideology of hate has no place in the world,

no place in Islam, and most certainly no place in Iraq. Terrorists'

tactics of striking innocent men and women and children are despicable

and cowardly. Terror has not derailed the political process, nor the

establishment of the rule of law. Despite fears of retaliation by al-

Qaida and other terrorists, millions of Iraqis chose to participate in

the process that will decide the future of their nation.

The Iraqi security forces have also started to make a significant

difference. According to our military leaders and officials on the

ground, the Iraqi security forces were clearly in the lead in securing

polling sites around the country. Backed by the coalition forces, the

Iraqi military presence was increased by 35 percent since January.

Press reports indicated that scattered instances of violence were

quickly suppressed by the Iraqis.

This accomplishment indicates the willingness of the Iraqi security

forces to stand up to insurgents and protect their fellow countrymen.

With each Iraqi soldier trained and equipped to carry out the mission,

Iraq draws closer to be able to stand on its own and protect Iraq's

freedom.

As they have learned the power of the ballot box, Iraqis will soon be

experiencing the strength of the rule of law during the trial of Saddam

Hussein that convenes today. Only a couple thousand years ago,

thousands of Iraqis--including women and children--were killed,

tortured, and wrongfully imprisoned. Nevertheless, the current Iraqi

Government fully understands the importance of a fair trial and the

precedents it will establish. As a result of these advancements in

Iraq, the country's most brutal dictator will face trial by a jury of

his peers, a trial that thousands of Saddam's victims never received.

The world will pay close attention as the Iraqi judicial system moves

forward with this challenge. I am confident the Iraqis will adhere to

the highest standard of the rule of law to reach a proper conclusion.

Today, the successful referendum in Iraq would not have been possible

without our brave men and women in uniform who were called by our

Nation's leaders to perform a noble but difficult task. Their

commitment and dedication to peace and prosperity around the globe has

never been more evident. Nearly 150,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, and

marines are deployed in Iraq, doing their duty with pride, patriotism,

and perseverance. Our success in Iraq and Afghanistan has not come

without cost. Those who have fallen have served a cause greater than

themselves and deserve a very special honor. My heart goes out to the

families whose sons and daughters have made the ultimate sacrifice.

The people of Iraq have clearly spoken of their desire for a free and

democratic Iraq. The terrorists understand that their only chance is to

break the will of the American people and force us to retreat. We will

not waver in our support of the Iraqi people. We will not waver in our

support of the democratic process and the rule of law. And we will not

waver in our cause for freedom in a land that has known nothing but

oppression. The lessons learned in previous world conflicts have proven

that when the stakes are so high, we must remain firm, resist the

enemy, and fight until the war is won.

Mr. President, our Nation has a leader who has made it clear that

winning the war on terror is a defining moment for the civilized world.

Since September 11, 2001, President Bush has taken bold steps to ensure

the safety and the security of the United States, especially against

terrorist organizations and the nation states that support them.

Specifically, since President Bush has taken office, the United

States, under his leadership, has--and I would like to list a number of

successes against terrorist organizations--overtaken two terrorist

regimes, rescued two nations and liberated some 50 million people;

captured or killed close to two-thirds of known senior al-Qaida

operatives; captured or killed 45 of the 55 most wanted in Iraq,

including Iraq's deposed dictator, Saddam Hussein; hunted down

thousands of terrorists and regime remnants in Afghanistan and Iraq;

disrupted terrorist cells on most continents and likely prevented a

number of planned attacks.

This is an astounding record of accomplishment for our Commander in

Chief, his national security staff, and the phenomenal men and women of

our military services. The United States went to war in Afghanistan and

Iraq, risking significant loss of life and treasure to protect our way

of life. Our goals are clear and twofold: Destroy the nexus of

terrorism and weapons of mass destruction that personified the two

ousted regimes and create in their stead stable, democratic states able

to participate in the modern world today. And we see the results of

that successful effort in both Afghanistan and Iraq. We succeeded in

our first goal, having killed or captured perpetrators and supporters

of the enemy terrorists.

As I discussed previously, the courageous people of Afghanistan and

Iraq are making remarkable progress toward adoption of constitutional

reforms to secure momentum for a lasting democratic independence. Our

Commander in Chief deserves recognition for these achievements. America

is safer because he took action, and the world will be a better place

when the foes of freedom are defeated. We must stay the course and

follow through with determination and perseverance. We must turn to

those who doubt our mission and speak of the tremendous courage being

shown by the Iraqi and Afghan people who are just beginning to enjoy

the fruits of freedom. We must constantly thank our men and women in

our Armed Forces who have so valiantly served our Nation, and we must

remind ourselves that the global war on terrorism is not about religion

or ethnicity; it is about freedom and whether we will allow others to

dictate our freedom. We must not give in to the ideology of terror, and

we must remain committed to those who need our assistance so much.

As we review the history of Saddam Hussein as he begins standing

trial today, I view with optimism the ability of the Iraqi people to

conduct a fair and just trial. They face a history of continued

inhumane actions by a ruthless dictator in Saddam Hussein for thousands

upon thousands of people who were massacred and killed for no real,

apparent reason other than the fact that they disagreed with Saddam,

who was the ruthless dictator in charge.

History takes us back many years. Saddam came into power a number of

decades ago, and during that time we saw a record number of injustices

that occurred to the Iraqi people. We saw, in 1980, the persecution of

the Faylee Kurds. We saw, in 1983, the Kurdish massacres targeted

against Barzanis and the KDP. In 1988, we saw the Anfal campaign. As

many as 182,000 people disappeared during this time period.

In 1988, we saw in Halabja the Saddam regime launched chemical

attacks against more than 40 of its own villagers. On March 16, 1988,

the regime dropped sarin and VX on the town of Halabja, killing more

than 5,000 people and injuring thousands more. Many of the survivors

suffered long-term medical complications, and thousands died. There

have been significant instances of birth defects in children born to

parents of Halabja, and many are still suffering from the effects of

the attack.

In 1991, during the Shi'a uprising in the south, the regime brutally

massacred tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians. Also in 1991,

once Kurdish autonomy was declared, many Kurds living below the green

line were massacred, leaving mass gravesites in the Kirkuk region. In

1991, with an uprising in Najaf, we saw again the demonstrated

brutality of this regime. As it put down the uprising, many of the

perpetrators were rounded up, were arrested, and many of the

participants who were placed in jails were tortured.

The Marsh Arabs, whose people had lived for thousands of years in the

longstanding Marsh Arab area, were forced to leave the land after it

was no longer cultivable and habitable because the regime decided to

divert their waters to other sources.

All Iraqis who opposed or questioned the leadership of Saddam

Hussein, whether Shi'a, Sunni, Christian, Kurd, Turkoman, or other,

were systematically intimidated, tortured, and executed during the

regime.

We are now in a new chapter of the trial of Saddam Hussein. Many of

these atrocities will come to light. As I mentioned earlier, I have a

lot of faith in the Iraqi people, that they will conduct the trial in a

responsible way following international law and also, in some

instances, applying their local law.

The credit for freeing the Iraqi people I think goes to the men and

women in the Armed Forces, it goes to the American people who have

shown perseverance through this period of time, and also to our

President, our great leader, who has demonstrated strong leadership not

only in America but across the world in this fight for freedom. The

real beneficiaries are going to be the Iraqi and the Afghani people.

I, along with many other Americans, will be watching as the trial

runs its course. This is not going to be an American trial or any kind

of world trial, although international procedures will be followed. But

it will be a trial that will reflect the freedoms of the Iraqi people

and reflect their form of justice.

I wish the Iraqi people well. I commend our President for a job very

well done. Again, I want to recognize the sacrifice and commitment of

our men and women in the military who have been so brave and

forthright, and have done overall a great job in representing America

on the battlefield in their fight for freedom.

I yield the floor.