Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate the 1-year anniversary of

Iraqi sovereignty, I would like to take the time to express my

gratitude and appreciation for the men and women of the United States

military who are fighting for freedom in Iraq and around the world,

both those still fighting and those who have fallen. These soldiers of

liberty are following the tradition of what Franklin Delano Roosevelt

described as ``the greatest arsenal of democracy.''

From Bunker Hill to Gettysburg, and from the beaches of Normandy to

the rice paddies of Vietnam, no nation has lost so many in the name of

liberty. Indeed, never before in the history of mankind has one people

acted to free so many of the world's oppressed, both within and beyond

its borders.

America does not fight for land, glory or riches. No, Mr. Speaker, we

fight to free those who live on the land, to spread the bounties of

freedom, and to bring the riches of liberty to those who cannot do the

job alone. So it has been, and so it is in Iraq. Our brave soldiers and

support personnel are engaged in a battle as important as any the

United States has ever before waged, for the success of democracy in

Iraq is a crucial test of the ideals this Nation was founded upon.

Our founding texts all proclaim freedom's universalism. Liberty is

not the unique right of Americans or even Westerners, but is mankind's

right. Indeed, it is a right that according to our Declaration of

Independence is unalienable.

We went to Iraq because Saddam Hussein's dictatorship was a threat to

his neighbors, the Middle East, the United States and his own people.

We remain in Iraq because we know that sometimes liberty needs some

nursing before it can grow on its own. We have not abandoned other

people of the world after their liberation, and we will not abandon

Iraq. We will continue fighting for freedom's survival.

And while we know that the men and women who are lost to freedom's

cause will never be forgotten, that knowledge can never fully heal the

pain of their families. The hole left in their lives by their lost

loved-one can never be fully filled. Still, from their sacrifice, much

solace can be taken.

In times of war, it is often best to look to our history to see how

past generations of Americans dealt with the loss of their countrymen

in just causes. During the civil war, the most trying time in this

Nation's history, hundreds of thousands of families lost their sons as

they tried to save the union.

At the height of the casualties, President Lincoln sought to reassure

a wounded nation. The Gettysburg address was a clarion call to those

who heard his immortal words. In memory of the soldiers lost at the

Battle of Gettysburg, Lincoln delivered the greatest 2 minutes in

American oratorical history.

The speech's poignancy may never again be matched, as in just over 20

words Lincoln honored the dead for their service, ensured that their

sacrifice would not be in vain, and captured the essence of the

American experiment.

But I am afraid that too often Lincoln's words are forgotten, so I

would like to read them aloud now so that all Members might hear them

and take them to heart when considering our current conflict. For

Lincoln's words are as true for our lost men and women in Iraq as they

were for the fallen at Gettysburg:

Mr. Speaker, I am humbled by Lincoln's words. And while I cannot

match their eloquence, I can heed their meaning. From the commitment of

the fallen in Iraq, I will take increased devotion to the cause of

liberty, the cause for which they fought, and I hope so too will all

Members of this body.

President Lincoln used the Gettysburg address to honor the dead not

by shirking from conflict, but rather by issuing a clarion call to

continue fighting in their stead.

As we approach the Fourth of July, it is fitting that we celebrate

Iraq's fledgling democracy, and remember those who fought for freedom's

dawn there, and in other parts of the world.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the men and women of our Armed Forces, and hope

they will return home soon with the knowledge that they have served in

the tradition of America's Great Emancipator, and brought freedom to

those who would otherwise never have known its glories.