Mr. Speaker, certainly the last 2 weeks we have seen a

great deal written and spoken about the conflict in the country of

Iraq. The middle of this month we will see the third popular election

held in the country of Iraq this year.

Stay the course or pull out now, these seem to be the two recurrent

themes debated in this House and on the editorial pages across the

country.

Our military action was really never popular with the press here at

home, and it has been portrayed in the most negative possible fashion

for the past 2\1/2\ years. The result, predictably, is declining

popular support for military activity in Iraq in this country and the

very real possibility that the United States will lose its political

will to complete the mission in Iraq. This would be truly tragic as we

are so tantalizingly close to success in this effort.

I was not a Member of Congress when the vote was taken to provide the

President the necessary authority for military action in Iraq. I do

believe it was the right decision, and I believe I would have voted

affirmatively had I been here. I do not recall ever believing that it

would be easy, but I do recall believing that it was justified and

necessary.

When the House and the Senate considered and approved the resolution

authorizing the President to use military force to bring Saddam Hussein

in compliance with the United Nations resolutions, several strong

reasons were made for the foundation of this decision: weapons of mass

destruction, to be sure; a gathering threat; violation of the no-fly

zone; targeting our aircraft; endangering our pilots; violations of

U.N. sanctions; violations of the terms of surrender from the first

Gulf War in 1991; failure to account for Kuwaitis taken prisoner in the

first Gulf War; failure to make restitution to the country of Kuwait;

mass murder; mass graves; and the only world leader to have ever used

weapons of mass destruction in an offensive fashion.

These were the details of the resolution supported by a bipartisan

majority of Members of Congress. The policy of the United States as

laid out by law in 1998, passed by the Congress, signed by the

President was to effect regime change in the country of Iraq. In 2002,

by approving this resolution, the Congress and President Bush were

finally enforcing this long-standing U.S. foreign policy goal in an

environment radically changed by September 11, 2001, and the gathering

threat that Iraq and other rogue nations represent to the safety and

the security of the American people.

The failure to find warehouses stockpiling weapons of mass

destruction has now somehow morphed into allegations that the President

misled the American public.

Opponents of this war argue that President Bush and other leaders

misled the American people through dishonorable misrepresentations of

the Iraqi intelligence; but those allegations are, in fact, themselves

lies, refuted and discredited; and this type of representation has only

emboldened our enemies to target the United States personnel overseas.

Debating how the war has been executed is a debate that we should be

having in this country, but attempting to change the facts in the lead-

up to the war is disingenuous and has more pernicious ramifications

than temporary political advantage.

I have been to Iraq four times in the past 2 years. It is my

impression that one day the big story will be that the press missed the

big story in Iraq. What you see in the country of Iraq and what is

reported by the press in this country are two completely different

worlds.

Every time I have been there, I have been struck by how much progress

has been made by American troops. Each time I have traveled to Iraq, I

have been moved by the dedication of our military and their commitment

to the completion of this mission.

My first visit to the Baghdad airport in August of 2003 left me

thinking that the place looked like the city dump. During visits in

January and August of this year, the airport was a clean environment,

with obvious evidence of commercial aviation having resumed.

This is a picture of the Baghdad power plant in August of 2003. This

is a rusted, burned up generator that Saddam Hussein had charged his

engineers with keeping running under pain of death.

Contrast that to August of this year, 2005. This is a generator in

the city of Kirkuk called the ``mother of all generators.'' This

generator was taken across the desert at great risk to our Marines and

has been installed in the city of Kirkuk. It is now providing about 12

percent of Iraq's generating power, truly an amazing success story by

our Marines. I do not recall having read about it in the press back

home here.

Another picture, flying over the town of Kirkuk, and I was taking

pictures randomly out the window of our Black Hawk helicopter and did

not notice until later, there are two small figures here. One is waving

at the helicopter; and if you look very closely and I have done this,

she is waving with all five fingers but, very importantly, next to her

is a small male child, probably her brother. Think of this, Mr.

Speaker, in the city of Kirkuk, prior to our taking out Saddam Hussein,

this sister could not mention the fact she had a brother. In fact, her

family probably has a crawl space in the wall of this house where the

boy could be hidden when Saddam's conscriptionists came through town.

It truly is an amazing transformation in that country. We are very

close to having the third and final election for this year. We are

close to having sufficient Iraqi forces trained and equipped to

participate in their own security operations. Our soldiers are very

close to having completed their mission. Congress should not desert

them now.