Mr. Speaker, 65 years ago today our Nation was

attacked by enemies of freedom, and we heeded the call to action. The

Greatest Generation battled tyranny and then led the effort to help

Europe rebuild.

On September 11, 2001, another day that will live in infamy in our

Nation's

history, our mission once again became clear. On that day 4 years ago,

Islamic fanatics killed 3,000 souls, but would have delighted in

killing 10 or 100 times that number. Our shores and subsequently those

of our allies were attacked.

Collectively, we resolved to root out and eliminate the scourge of

evil responsible for these threats. And as a global leader, refusing to

be victimized and surrender to those who seek our destruction, the

United States assumed the responsibility, as it has done many times

before, to protect not just our homeland but, in the words of Woodrow

Wilson, to make the world safe for democracy.

And so it is that for freedom's sake we must fulfill our mission in

Iraq.

I am proud that my stepson, Douglas Lehtinen, and his fiancee,

Lindsay Nelson, are serving as marine officers in Iraq, flying F-18s.

The men and women in their squadron are proud of their mission of

victory in Iraq.

Vice President Dick Cheney summed things up quite appropriately on

Tuesday of this week when he addressed our troops in Fort Drum, New

York. He said,

Our mission is not easy. But our efforts and the noble sacrifice of

our fine troops are yielding results. The naysayers and the fatalistic,

those who question the ability of our U.S. forces to succeed refuse to

acknowledge the political and psychological transformation that is

taking place in Iraq, and the long-term positive impact that our

efforts in Iraq will have in helping to curtail the spread of Islamic

extremist and jihadist activities.

Today, Saddam Hussein is on trial for his crimes against humanity.

And most of the villainous heirs to his legacy have been neutralized.

Together with our Iraqi allies, we are prevailing against a brutal

insurgency and assisting the people of Iraq in their efforts to create

a truly representative free market Arab democracy in a region polluted

with despotic regimes.

Tangible examples of success include, in January, the people of Iraq

held their first free democratic election for the transitional national

assembly. The turnout for this election was astonishing. Roughly 8.5

million Iraqis risked their lives to participate.

This was followed by the drafting of a new constitution. The debate

on the various provisions in the Constitution was a perfect example of

how the Iraqi people are exercising those fundamental freedoms

protected from a Democratic society.

Today, the Iraqi people prepare for elections next week that will

continue Iraq's transformation from a brutal totalitarian state to a

free and Democratic Nation. But it is not just our observations that

tell the story of the progress that we are making and the need to forge

ahead.

Iraqis themselves are expressing optimism as shown by a survey last

month by the International Republican Institute. This survey indicated

that 56 percent of Iraqis thought that things would be better in 6

months. Just the other day, The Washington Post quoted an Egyptian

democracy advocate who was an early opponent of the war in Iraq,

admitting that any way you look at it, toppling Saddam Hussein has

unfrozen the Middle East he said, just as Napoleon's 1798 expedition

did. Elections in Iraq forced the theocrats and the autocrats to put

democracy on the agenda, he said.

Not least significantly, Mr. Speaker, Iraq's quest for liberty has

had an interesting ripple effect throughout the region. For example the

Syrians have been significantly pushed back in Lebanon, and Assad's

tyrannical regime has been impressively weakened.

To those who claim that we need to pack up and depart, mission

incomplete, who demand the need for benchmarks and the transfer of

authority, I say open your eyes. For 2 years, we have been doing just

that. Setting benchmarks and meeting them.

Benchmarks relating to the transfer of authority. Benchmarks for

Iraqis to take helm of leadership positions, for elections to choose a

national assembly. Benchmarks to select a constitution. My colleagues,

let us recall the words of former President Ronald Reagan, who said,

the ultimate determinant in the struggle now going on for the world

will be but a test of wills and ideals, a trial of spiritual resolve

for the values we hold, the beliefs we cherish, and the ideals to which

we are dedicated. With freedom on our side, we cannot fail.