Mr. President, this is a very pleasant and happy day

for the Senator from New Mexico, and I hope for many Senators,

Americans, and people who like freedom around the world.

I congratulate the President of the United States. He has had a very

powerful commitment to freedom and democracy in Iraq. There has been

discussion for many months about whether our mission in Iraq would work

and about why we are there, but I think today we have seen the first

giant step toward freedom for the wonderful Iraqi people who have

suffered so long under tyranny and were made slaves, whose loved ones

suffered, were enslaved, murdered, entombed, and killed. Thousands

emigrated from that country. This is a great day for them, and I think

they showed us that it was a real issue.

I am sure many did not believe these people would risk anything

serious, including their lives, to have a chance at freedom. The

President, by his strength of character and commitment against many

odds, carried this issue forth to an electorate and an election, and

has stayed with it until this great day when we saw grassroots freedom

come alive.

This is an occasion when some might wonder whether we ought to have a

free press over there observing things, especially in a war zone so to

speak, but this is an occasion when it is obvious that it worked. Even

skeptics who were there could not deny reality. The reality was that

people, young and old, were not afraid of the threats of terrorism and

risked everything for that little idea of exercising their franchise.

We saw them putting up their inked finger indicating ``I voted.'' I

thought it was tremendous. For that, I am very proud that I supported

the President in this. I hope he is proud of what he has done.

I don't want anyone to think the Senator from New Mexico does not

understand there are many pitfalls, and there may still be some that

are difficult to overcome.

Ultimately, freedom and democracy are not the end. You have to have

some kind of economic prosperity, stability, and law and order. I have

said democracy and freedom do not work too well if you are hungry, if

you are starving. That makes it pretty easy for people who would

overturn freedom and democracy. The Iraqis are a fortunate people. They

have a lot of resources. Let's hope they can develop them to the

betterment of all their people.

There are three things I am thankful for today. The second is the

U.S. military. We send our military to do much on behalf of the

American people and to accomplish missions we think are important. This

one I am sure many people looked at and said: They are just not going

to be able to do it; this is not a role for American fighting men; they

can't help with the voting; they can't get rid of the terrorists in

sufficient numbers, even with sufficient intelligence and planning, to

let an election move on. A lot of people thought that.

I submit that those who run the American military at the top, and

those whose boots are on the ground and who run the machinery and

equipment, are sending a signal: You asked us to do something. Give us

some time and we will solve the problems and we will do it.

Didn't they do that and prove it yesterday? Did anybody think it

could be so peaceful in so much of Iraq? There was so much opportunity

for people to walk to the polls and not get killed, to see their

neighbors going and then get sufficient strength and courage to join

them because the terrorists were not there. There was some terrific

plan, with the Iraqi soldiers who were getting trained, and ours, to

create this safe haven, a significant safe haven. I surmise that a lot

of hard work took place in the rooms where planning is done, in the

evenings when people work, between our military leaders and the new

budding leaders of the Iraqi military and Iraqi law enforcement.

I think the Iraqi police and military probably were invigorated by

this event, and I would think that they, too, will be stronger and

better for it.

Again, as I have on a number of occasions in my years as a Senator--

it is going on 33, so I have seen a few victories--I have seen a few

involvements where it was very difficult. I have seen the Vietnam war,

seen the Korean war a little bit; I have seen great achievements and

otherwise, but I think this is a rather significant indication of how

our military will help us if we will help them.

I am so proud we did not get to the point where the naysayers in

America made it impossible for the military to do their jobs. It was

getting ever closer to that, but it did not get there. I think that is

very fortunate for freedom, liberty, and the whole Middle East--a

terribly important part of the world.

Then, lastly, I congratulate the Iraqi people. Many of those who did

not like what was going on over there, many who voted for us to go in

and changed their minds--there were 77 Senators who voted for us to do

that, go in--to some who had just been against it turned and were

accusatory of our President. Some called him a liar. Some said he had

misled. That is for another day, another argument, which I have already

made that I think clearly indicates those kinds of things were not

true. There were no weapons of mass destruction, but that doesn't mean

there were lies about it.

But some said the Iraqi people should have been dancing in the

streets as our military marched through and went to Baghdad in such

fast order, you recall, with very few lives lost in the American

military, and very few Iraqis. But there was not laughter and joy and

marching bands in the streets. But when the day finally came, when the

people thought they were really rid of the tyranny of Saddam, they did.

They did come forward with joy in the streets and hope in their eyes,

feeling very satisfied with the job they were doing by going to vote.

So it is a very pleasant task for a Senator to come to the floor

after having heard so much negative about that, even negative about our

military leaders, and to say to them, to the Iraqi people, the

President, to the American people who have supported this effort for

freedom--we all have supported it with a lot of our tax dollars, along

with our best men and women and a great deal of equipment and other

things--Job well done. May the next set of actions that are required

come forth and be as good as this for the people there in Iraq and the

Middle East. I only hope that as we look at this and are rather pleased

as Americans, that some of our normal and natural allies in the world

who have become pointedly in opposition to what we have done and have

carried it even further, to where people seem to think Americans are

not their friends and they don't want to be our friends and we have

qualities and attributes they don't like, I hope this sends a signal

that maybe they ought to become more rational and reasonable about what

we mean to each other. After all, we have been through a lot together--

France, Germany, Italy, Belgium. We don't have to worry about the

English. They have been with us all the way. We have been through a lot

of sweat and blood in the name of freedom with those allies, to our

cost in lives and to our cost in billions of dollars. It is not that

they owe us anything. But I think they might at least say they might

have been wrong

in this or at least maybe the American President had a reasonably good

idea and how we ought to get together and hope that together we will

try to make it work. I hope that is not asking too much.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.