Madam Speaker, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks against

the United States, I was sent on the ground for a short period of time

to Afghanistan. As a Navy admiral, I saw what needed to be

accomplished. Eighteen months later, I returned on the ground and saw

what had not been done because we tragically changed the focus of our

attention and our resources to Iraq.

Now, Afghanistan has become once again prey to terrorists and the

Taliban have moved back into the southern ungoverned regions and the

provinces.

Because of this failure to have our legal or political or security

structures there that we were trying to support be established, we were

unable to have economic activity, the education take root so that we

would be able to harness the efforts to have livelihoods established

and an infrastructure in place, to overcome what General Eikenberry,

our U.S. commander who was the NATO commander earlier last year said,

Secretary of Defense Gates has recently said that we will place 3,000

troops into Afghanistan because of the possible spring offensive of the

Taliban. That is too little and way too late.

We have to be able to bring the infrastructure into those ungoverned

regions so the Taliban once again cannot provide a safe haven for al

Qaeda, that is presently in a safe haven because of this tragic

misadventure in Iraq, within Pakistan.

But more to my point today, I do not understand the criticism of a

very good Secretary of Defense, Secretary Gates, that the United States

wants to point at NATO and say you have not met your commitment in

Afghanistan when, in fact, potentially a little known fact is that the

United States itself has not met its own requirement for trainers and

mentors of the Afghanistan National Army and the Afghanistan National

Police. In fact, we are 63 percent short of our goal. That's 2,400

troops.

It all began in Afghanistan. And if we are to look back there 2 years

from now and another tragedy would have been planned by the al Qaeda in

another safe haven, whether Pakistan or Afghanistan, how can we say, as

a senior commander said, ``In Iraq we do what we must; in Afghanistan

we do what we can?''

The right strategic template is as Winston Churchill said,

It is required to ensure that the education, the economic activity,

the wells, the reconstruction can be accomplished, but you can only do

that in a secure enough environment. That, again, is one of the

tragedies of this misadventure of Iraq.