Mr. President, normally I don't get an opportunity to

hear my good friend from Illinois, but I am glad I was here as he gave

one of his appraisals of the situation in Iraq. As Paul Harvey often

says, I would like to provide the rest of the story; arguably, a more

balanced view of what is going on in that very important country.

In fact, freedom has taken another giant step forward in Iraq. On

October 15 the Iraqi people voted overwhelmingly to ratify their

Constitution. Iraqis turned out in stunning numbers to embrace

democracy, tolerance, and a just rule under law. In fact, they turned

out in greater numbers than we turned out here last November, which was

a very high turnout by U.S. standards--and, of course, most Americans

were not afraid they would get shot when they went to the polls.

Iraqis created a constitutional republic in the heart of the Middle

East. This is an unequivocal victory in the war on terror. It is the

only way we can assess it. With their votes, millions of brave Iraqis

rejected dictatorship and created a republic. They rejected rule by

fear and terror and embraced rule by the consent of the governed. They

stood together as a country under one motto: ``we the people.''

Nearly 10 million Iraqis turned out to vote, a turnout rate of 63

percent. That

was up from 60 percent last January when they elected their interim

government. That was 3 percent higher than our own turnout here last

November, 60 percent, which was 10 percent higher than our turnout here

in 2000, which was 50 percent. Again, I say, those Iraqis, many of

them, might have been concerned about their safety when they went to

vote. That was the first free election in Iraq in over 50 years last

January.

Furthermore, and very significantly, turnout among Sunni Arabs

increased dramatically. This is a testament that the policy of

continued political outreach to influential Sunni leaders during the

constitutional drafting process was a success.

For instance, in the heavily Sunni province of Salahaddeen in the

city of Ishaqi, only 300 people voted last January in the interim

election vote. This time around, on the Constitution, on October 15,

10,000 Iraqis voted. Three hundred in January, 10,000 in October,

largely Sunnis. This is only one city, but the turnout was up

dramatically. Many in the Sunni population obviously decided their

interests are best served not by fighting an armed insurgency but by

joining the political process.

Not only did Iraqis turn out in record numbers, they also voted to

ratify their new organizing document in overwhelming numbers. The final

results show over 78 percent of Iraqi voters said yes to the

Constitution. Of Iraq's 18 provinces, 12 voted yes with majorities

exceeding 94 percent. Three more provinces voted yes with solid

majorities, including the province of Baghdad. In the Baghdad province,

77 percent ratified the Constitution.

The Iraqi Government decided that for the Constitution to fail, at

least three provinces had to vote ``no'' with at least two-thirds of

the vote. Only two provinces did that, the Anbar province and the

province I mentioned earlier, Salahaddeen.

The democratic process in Iraq will continue to move forward. Iraqis

are now preparing for another nationwide election pursuant to the

Constitution they ratified. That election on December 15 will be for

the first permanent democratic government in Iraq's history. They will

choose 275 members of a council of representatives to serve all the

people of Iraq.

It is odd to me that at such a moment of triumph in that country,

there are still those who call for America to get out while we can in

the midst of this triumph that is occurring there. They believe our

troop withdrawal should be arbitrarily based on the calendar rather

than on achieving results. In short, they want to cut and run. And

until we do, they will endlessly criticize our troops' efforts but

offer no alternatives of their own.

It is important to remember to withdraw prematurely from Iraq, as the

cut-and-run crowd suggests, would play right into the hands of the

terrorists. The terrorists themselves have already told us that. They

have told us what they have in mind. In a letter our intelligence

forces intercepted, written by Ayman al-Zawahiri, the No. 2 terrorist

in the al-Qaida hierarchy, and sent to lead Iraqi terrorist Abu Musab

al-Zarqawi, we learn that the terrorists' foremost goal is to drive

America out of Iraq. No great surprise.

Here is how al-Zawahiri instructs his partner in villainy:

No surprise.

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So they clearly not only want Iraq, they want to spread this plague

into the countries surrounding Iraq.

Al-Zawahiri goes on to say:

Those are chilling words from our enemies.

Their plans are laid bare for all of us to see. They want us to cut

and run. Worse still, they expect it. And then they will turn Iraq into

a terrorist haven.

Al-Zawahiri realizes that the terrorists can never hope to defeat

America on the battlefield. The only way they can defeat us is by

undermining our resolve with continued suicide bombings, gruesome

beheadings performed for the camera, and guerilla sneak attacks, all

brought to American living rooms through the media.

The terrorists believe they can shape American policy--policy

determined, in part, by this chamber--by killing Americans, because

they have successfully done so before. In 1983, terrorists killed 241

Americans in Beirut, and American forces were withdrawn from Beirut as

a result.

And America did not take the threat of terrorism seriously after the

first bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, nor did we take it

seriously after the destruction of our embassies in Tanzania and Kenya

in 1998, nor did we take it seriously after the attack on the USS Cole

in 2000.

The terrorists believe that our determination to fight them now,

after 9/11, is the exception rather than the rule. They believe that

eventually we will tire, falter, and fail in this fight.

We must make plain for them--in a language they can understand--that

they are gravely mistaken.

America is not going to cut and run before the job is done. For our

own security, for the security of the Iraqi people, and for the

security of the world, we must defeat the terrorists and leave behind a

strong, stable, and secure democratic Iraq.

The terrorists are rightfully scared because America is fighting and

winning the war on terror. We have made incredible progress in Iraq in

2\1/2\ short years.

I think we ought to take a look at the progress that has been made.

Taking note of this chart, Saddam Hussein came to power in 1979 and

was in power from 1979 to 2003. What were the hallmarks of those 24

years for the people of Iraq? Over 4,000 political prisoners were

summarily executed--one of his great accomplishments; 50,000 Kurds

killed, many of them with chemical weapons; 395,000 people were forced

to leave Iraq during that 24-year period.

They had to get out or be killed.

Iraq had no free elections and no free newspapers, and Saddam Hussein

stood above the law.

What has happened in the 2\1/2\ years since Saddam Hussein's fall

from power? Iraqis are now innocent until proven guilty. They have a

legal system. Seventy-five Kurds have been elected to the legislature,

as compared to 50,000 Kurds getting killed during Saddam's regime. Over

270,000 of those Iraqis who had to leave the country--of the 395,000

who were forced to flee Iraq--have come back home to build a new free

Iraq, and 9.8 million people voted on the constitution on October 15.

They weren't any free elections for 24 years under Saddam. They have

over 100 free newspapers--100 free newspapers in Iraq now. They have

more competition probably than we do, with freedom of speech breaking

out all over Iraq.

Hussein, who stood above the law, now is on trial, subject to the law

in Iraq.

That sums up the progress that has been made. The 24-year period of

terror is over and a new democratic, free Iraq is emerging.

Before I leave the floor, I want to offer my colleagues some words

of bravery from ordinary Iraqis, as an antidote to the al-Zawahiri

letter I read earlier. These are the people who defied al-Zawahiri and

al-Zarqawi to vote for the free future of their country. What these

courageous people have to say should convince anybody that the Iraqis

understand and are willing to pay the price of freedom.

Here is what one fellow had to say:

Munthir Abbas Elaiwi of Baghdad agrees.

That is from one of the Iraqis participating in the progress. And if

any terrorists think the people of Iraq do not hold their new republic

dear, let them heed the words of Munthir's older brother, Naseer Abbas,

also of Baghdad. He states quite simply:

Iraqis are our partners in the war on terror, and they understand the

magnitude of our shared cause. They realize the power a thriving

democracy in the heart of the Middle East can have as a counter-example

to tyrannical regimes like Iran, whose President recently called for

Israel to be The Iraqis have

embraced liberty, and rejected the homicidal urgings of terrorists. I

hope my colleagues will join me in saluting them and their commitment

to freedom.

Tyrannical leaders who repress their people much as Saddam Hussein

once did the Iraqis should make no mistake: The people in your country

are looking at Iraq and wondering, ``Why not here? Why not now?''

The terrorists do not have the right answers to those questions.

Americans, and Iraqis, do.