Mr. Speaker, today was an historic day on this House

floor when we heard in a joint session of Congress from the Prime

Minister of Iraq, Nouri Al-Maliki. The Iraqi people have spoken and

their prime minister has spoken.

Last night during our special hour, Mr. Speaker, two of my colleagues

from Georgia talked about the economic activity of this country and how

well we have done under the policies of this President and this

Republican leadership, and they termed that hour the truth hour as

presented by the truth squad, to make sure the facts are presented to

our colleagues and to the American people, the true facts.

What I would like to do in this short time that we have tonight, Mr.

Speaker, is to talk about the true facts in regard to Iraq and the

Iraqi people and why we need to continue to support them and not

consider for a moment to bail out in these difficult times that they

are continuing to go through.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just talk about some of the progress that we

have made. I have got a couple of slides here that I would like to

present.

First, just talking about the security in Iraq, Iraq's brutal former

dictator, Saddam Hussein, as we all know, is behind bars and has been

for the past couple of years. Just in the last couple of months, Mr.

Speaker, the infamous, the notorious Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader

of al Qaeda in Iraq, was eliminated by United States troops, with the

help, I might add, Mr. Speaker, of the Iraqi people, from actionable

intelligence that we obtained from them.

The Iraqi Security Forces now number over 260,000, and they are

participating in more than 90 percent, 90 percent, of all security

operations in their Nation. The Iraqi citizens are coming forth, as I

say, with tips about insurgents like al-Zarqawi and terrorist

activities, more than 4,500 tips in March of this year alone.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, this infamous photograph of Zarqawi is

recognized by every Member in this Chamber. And listen to his quote.

This was a letter to al Qaeda in February of 2004. Thank our

God that this infamous Zarqawi no longer exists and is no longer a

threat to the Iraqi people and to our brave military that are fighting

in Iraq.

Let me just speak a little bit about democracy, and, of course, the

prime minister spoke to that so well today. Prime Minister Maliki

serves as a democratically elected prime minister of Iraq. More than 70

percent of Iraq's citizens voted in a series of free and fair

elections. The Iraqi citizens ratified a constitution and they elected

the Iraqi National Unity Government. For the first time, women are part

of the political process, holding 31 percent of the assembly seats. The

number of judges has increased seven-fold.

Let's speak just a little bit about the society in Iraq. Mr. Speaker,

this shows a picture, that famous picture of an Iraqi woman holding up

that victory sign with that blue ink on her finger signifying that she

has voted, having stood in line all day long. There were lots of

terrorist attacks that day, yet the Iraqi people voted in a higher

percentage than we Americans vote in a presidential election year.

Our troops are continuing to help the Iraqi people in building

schools, sanitation projects and medical centers.

The Iraqi people can now watch commercial television and read

independent newspapers, signs of a growing freedom of speech.

Primary school enrollment has increased by nearly 3 million children.

Iraqi medical schools are graduating 2,250 doctors each year.

Unemployment is down dramatically. In the past 3 years, Iraq's GDP per

capita has more than doubled.

More than 40 countries and international groups have established

embassies or missions in Iraqi to assist the developing democracy.

Listen, Mr. Speaker, to some of the excerpts of the prime ministers

speech to Congress today on the floor of this House, as he thanked the

American people.

Again, this is the prime minister speaking today from the floor of

this House to the American people.

I want to just go on briefly before I call on one of my colleagues,

the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. King), who has joined me and would also

like to talk about the success that we have had in Iraq and why we need

to continue to stay the course.

That quote from prime minister Maliki today. And that is exactly

right.

So, Mr. Speaker, let us put to rest this question of doubt, of the

resolve of the Iraqi people and their commitment. Sure, we have made

tremendous sacrifices in 2,6000 of our soldiers who have been killed,

and probably 12,000 to 14,000 that have been severely injured in trying

to fight this Global War on Terror, and bring a form of democracy to

these people who are striving so hard for the principles of freedom.

We have paid a sacrifice. But they have paid a tremendous sacrifice.

And the estimate could be as many as 40,000 killed, if not more, many

of them innocent Iraqi citizens, and many of them women and children.

Mr. Speaker, it is a very important time today on the heels of the

prime minister's visit and speech to the Congress today that we talk

about this tonight. And, yes, once again the Truth Squad needs to speak

loudly on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, with that I would like to call on my colleague from Iowa

(Mr. King) for his remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say the gentleman from Iowa in

just a brief colloquy with him, and of course thanking him for being

with us tonight, that I am sure that he would agree that our Commander-

in-Chief needs to rely on the combatant commanders. Certain today of

course is General Casey, before that General Sanchez, before that

General Franks, to let him know in regard to how many troops need to be

on the ground and where they need to be positioned and how long they

need to stay.

I know that we have heard a lot from Members on the other side of the

aisle particularly calling for a date certain for a troop withdrawal or

reduction or redeployment 6,000 miles away, to Okinawa or whatever.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure my colleague from Iowa would agree that this

is a call that we need to leave to the combatant commanders to make

these decisions. I know that because of the insurgency, the up tick in

the insurgency, as these Islamic extremists continue to struggle in

their death throes post-Zarqawi, there is going to be some tough times;

and this is certainly not the time to give them your playbook. Would

you not agree with that?

I thank again the gentleman from Iowa.

My good friend, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Goode), has joined

us at this late hour. At this time, I would like to call on him for his

remarks concerning the Iraqi situation.

I thank the gentleman from Virginia. I don't think

anyone could possibly say it any better.

We must not break faith with those who have died for this cause and

those who have been severely injured and their families. We have an

obligation to them and to the Iraqi people.

I know all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle were comforted to

have the opportunity today to hear from the Iraqi Prime Minister and to

have him answer some of these tough questions in regard to their

commitment as well as our commitment. Because, as he said, we are a

freedom-loving people throughout the world. They feel the same about

liberty as we do, and their commitment to it is there, and it is

strong, and their deep appreciation.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the leadership for giving this opportunity to

spend about 30 minutes with our colleagues; and now we will turn it

over to our friends on the other side of the aisle for their time.