

breadwinner in a most horrible way; and now, they were facing the threat of deportation.

Mrs. Hasan and her teenage daughters think of themselves as Americans. The daughters are growing up here. Mrs. Hasan and all but the youngest daughter hold down jobs to make ends meet. One daughter attends Rutgers. Another daughter is studying at Kean College to become a teacher. They are the type of hard-working, reverent, patriotic, studious, industrious people that we want here in America; and they deserve to stay.

For the past 2½ years, I have been working with government agencies to keep the Hasan family in this country. I have pursued and exhausted every possible legal remedy to help the Hasan family stay. My Private Relief bill is the Hasan family's last hope of attaining permanent legal residency and eventually citizenship. Today, the House of Representatives passed that bill.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is no more crucial time to demonstrate to Muslims in America and around the world that we are a tolerant and sympathetic people. We must seize opportunities to showcase America's commitment to the democratic values that we are making great sacrifices to promote overseas.

This bill, of course, does not make everything all right. Duri Hasan and her daughters have lost their husband and father. Their lives have been given a severe blow. But with this bill, we avoid doing any further injury to them. I am very pleased to report the happy news to the Hasan family to whom today we here in the House have said, You belong here in America with us.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LIPINSKI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. LIPINSKI addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GINGREY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BLUMENAUER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

OUR GREATEST RESOURCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thought we would talk tonight about several things, about our recent several CODELs to Iraq, to the theater, and also about the defense bill, and lastly, about the resources, the great American asset that ties all of our defense issues together, and that is the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States.

I thought, Mr. Speaker, maybe I would just start off with my great colleagues, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON), in just talking about a couple of those great men and women in uniform.

I wanted to read a citation, Mr. Speaker, because we have had a lot of talk, lots of discussion and enormous publicity about the prison mess over the last several months. And one way we have countered that image that I think has wrongfully been splashed against lots of folks in uniform is by talking about the great heroism of a number of those people. And I remind my colleagues that we had some 16,000 Bronze Stars awarded in Iraq, some 127 Silver Stars, and I thought that tonight just to start off I would talk about a couple of the commendations that have been given to heroes in that very difficult theater in Iraq.

This is a Silver Star that was presented by order of the Secretary of the Navy to Staff Sergeant Adam R. Sikes, United States Marine Corps. I wanted to read this, Mr. Speaker.

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action against the enemy while serving as Platoon Sergeant, 1st Platoon, Company G, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, Regimental Combat Team 5, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force on 12 April 2003. During the Battle of At Tarmiyah, Staff Sergeant Sikes' platoon was pinned down by heavy small arms and rocket propelled grenade fire in the opening mo-

ments of the fight. Without orders, Staff Sergeant Sikes quickly rallied two of his squads and set them into position to suppress the enemy and prepare them to counter attack. With the squads in position, Staff Sergeant Sikes charged alone across the 70 meters of fire swept ground to close on the first enemy strongpoint, which he cleared with a grenade and rifle fire. Moving to the roof of a three-story building that was exposed to enemy fire, Staff Sergeant Sikes skillfully adjusted 60-millimeter mortar rounds onto nearby enemy positions. The rounds isolated the town from enemy reinforcement and decimated an enemy position in the nearby tree line. Upon learning that the other squad had taken casualties, Staff Sergeant Sikes moved to their position. With wounded Marines in a small compound, cut off by the enemy, Staff Sergeant Sikes signaled an amphibian vehicle and directed their evacuation while under a hail of small arms and rocket propelled grenade fire. By his bold leadership, wise judgment, and complete dedication to duty, Staff Sergeant Sikes reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service."

That is one of many, many commendations, Mr. Speaker, that have come out of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Here is another citation that I thought I would read tonight. This is a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal to Staff Sergeant Brian Porter, United States Marine Corps for heroic achievement while serving as tank commander, 3D Platoon, Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 7, 1st Marine Division in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. "Staff Sergeant Porter's actions against the enemy were quick and deadly. Upon initial contact with the enemy near Imam Anas with two of four tanks in the platoon temporarily unable to fire, he guided his tank to the right of the platoon and destroyed an Iraqi T-55 tank with main gun fire. He personally engaged and destroyed numerous armored personnel carriers and tanks to ensure the safety of the company. During a reconnaissance operation in Ad Diwaniyah, he secured the southern flank of the company. During the ensuing firefight involving mortar fire, machine gun fire, and rocket-propelled grenade fire, he destroyed a technical vehicle that was firing upon the platoon at close range. Staff sergeant Porter's initiative, perseverance, and total dedication to duty reflected credit upon him and were in keeping with the highest tradition of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service."

Mr. Speaker, these are obviously just a few out of thousands of citations that have been given to our soldiers and airmen and Naval personnel and United States Marines in theater in both Operation Iraqi Freedom and in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Mr. Speaker, if we have time at the end of our special order, I would like to

read a few more of those. But right now I would just like to introduce two of my great colleagues who also have been really working the issues that arise from this operation in Iraq and the operation in Afghanistan. I would like to yield first to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES).

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, first let me thank my good friend and chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), who spends every waking hour and then some doing everything he can to make sure our fine men and women in uniform have the support, the equipment, and the backing they need. So we are all owing a debt of gratitude to our chairman and to our good friend, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON). He and I have a lot of common friends in this fight. The gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) represents Ft. Jackson, a fine training facility, Parris Island, Marine Beaufort Air Station.

Every time I visit my troops at Ft. Bragg or Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina, I am constantly, continuously and consistently amazed at the attitude, the ability, the commitment, and the performance of these men and women who ask but little in return except the support of this Congress and the American people.

I have been to Iraq on a number of occasions. I was with the first group that went in. What our soldiers, sailors, Air Force, Marine and Coast Guardsmen put up with in terms of conditions, the things that they did not have but still came through, and won the fight in a remarkably short period of time with virtually no collateral damage to civilians and to other property is an incredible tribute to the servicemen and women that serve this country.

President Bush said something in Istanbul, Turkey just a week ago, and that was, in order to have justice, you had to have democracy. What our men and women in uniform are doing is providing for the Iraqi people and other surrounding nations the opportunity to see, to taste and to experience the democracy that equals freedom and ultimately justice. That is what we want for people all around the world, the privileges that we enjoy and, unfortunately, take for granted.

As I have been to Iraq and as I have visited our soldiers in training facilities, the amount of time and energy and effort that they put into making America safe, secure, and ultimately free is something that we can never repay. But I think for us to stand up and to stand tall and talk about the things that they are doing, whether it be in Fallujah, Baghdad, Najaf, Nasiriyah, and Afghanistan, these men and women 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, are out there doing the things that we call on them to do, tirelessly, without any idea of selfishness.

I cannot help but remember Daniel Metzdorf. I was in Iraq just a couple of

months ago and was there with our good friend, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) from the other side of the aisle and the minority leader, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), and they too share our respect for what they saw these men and women doing.

As we were headed back we stopped in Germany and visited our hospital at Landstuhl. We saw a number of folks, but the one I particularly remember because he looked like my son, Bob, as I walked in the door was Daniel Metzdorf of the 82nd Airborne. He had lost his leg. His concern was for the rest of his team. As he came back and has recovered, been at Walter Reed, he is a native of Florida but is back at Ft. Bragg now, his biggest concern was that his squad leader was not given sufficient recognition for the heroism that he exhibited in saving other members of his team when they were under attack by the enemy and the terrorists.

So as I think of him and the countless other men and women, a couple of whom the gentleman has referred to in those citations, I think we must continue to remind ourselves of how important these sacrifices are. And these are not sacrifices made at the whim of an individual or a Congress or a group of people. If we look at the record, the record is very clear from the past administration, from news media who now seem to have an extremely difficult time getting the facts right, reporting the actual conduct and the progress and wonderful things that our troops are doing for the people in Iraq, but as we look at that it is very clear and consistent, we have no choice. If we were to live up to the responsibilities of being a free and freer Nation, then we had to step in and stop these terrorists abroad before they could come to us.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to bringing a few more of these facts to light as we move on, but without dwelling too long at this time, I would like to turn over to a dear friend, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON). And we have supplied the gentleman with Abe Turner from Ft. Bragg to look after Ft. Jackson. So we are definitely a team and we work well together.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to say before the gentleman yields, I know he has been to Iraq and we really appreciate that great tour, and also the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) has spent a lot of time in Iraq. And I want to thank also the gentleman from California (Mr. CALVERT), a great member of the committee, and the gentleman from El Paso, Texas (Mr. REYES) who was there with me over the last couple of weeks. So we have had great members of the Committee on Armed Services going over. I think that gives us some insight of what the troops need when we are putting together our bill to get the tools so they can get the job done.

I thank the gentleman for his remarks, and I yield to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON).

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the chairman's leadership so much. We can all be proud of the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), as the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services. With his perspective as a veteran and with his devotion to the military, having a son serving in Iraq now, by his extraordinary leadership, I appreciate his coming and visiting Ft. Jackson last December. That was a highlight of my brief career here in Congress, to see the gentleman firsthand meeting with troops getting ready to deploy overseas. They were so honored to have the gentleman come and show his interest.

Mr. HUNTER. I want to thank the gentleman. I just want to remind the gentleman that my job here is lots of inside work and no heavy lifting.

It is interesting, we do a lot of things here that have some import and affect the ways our troops operate. But seeing those guys and ladies in 120 degree heat in Iraq and cheerful is an extraordinary experience.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. They can be cheerful because they know they have a chairman of the Committee on Armed Services who is personally interested in their safety and security and in promoting democracy and protecting the American people.

Additionally, I am very grateful to be here with my colleague from the north, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES).

I had an opportunity to visit with the gentleman at Ft. Bragg and visit with the Special Forces. It is so reassuring to see this new generation, to see how dedicated they are. Many of us had somewhat dismissed them as the Nintendo generation. Well, that is actually very positive because the equipment that they use is so high tech, it is crucial that they be able to operate equipment that is almost inconceivable in terms of advances in just a few years, and particularly even over the first Persian Gulf War, and the success of our troops and dedication is so heart warming.

Additionally, I was happy to hear the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES) reference Pope Air Force Base. I have a nephew who is currently still in the Air Force, and I am really proud that he served at Pope. But the perspective I would like to make tonight is indeed as a veteran, I retired after 31 years of service, it was last July, with my service with the Army National Guard, and I saw again firsthand the capable people who are protecting our country, because my job was as pre-mobilization legal counselor and additionally mobilization counseling. People did not whine. They knew, men and women, that they would be serving to protect the American people.

□ 2015

Additionally, I am happy to be the parent of three sons who are serving in the military. My oldest son is a young

attorney from Lexington, South Carolina. He has been mobilized. He is serving in Iraq. I am in touch with him virtually every day by BlackBerry, by satellite phone. It is very reassuring.

My second son is a graduate of the naval academy, an ensign in the Navy. I am very proud of him being in medical school.

My third son was just commissioned a month and a half ago at Clemson University, in the Army ROTC; and he will have a career in the signal corps with the Army National Guard.

I am just so proud that they have on their own seen that one of the best ways to promote our country is to serve in the military; and then, finally, as a Member of Congress, it has already been referenced by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES), I am very grateful to represent Fort Jackson, ably commanded by General Abe Turner.

General Turner is so well known here in Congress because he was Army liaison to Congress and did a masterful job. I then ran into him, of all things, in Kuwait where he was one of the leaders there and helping us protect and promote our troops.

Additionally, I represent the Marine air station at Beaufort. We are very proud of their service. It is a joint Navy and Marine facility with squadrons of both; and I also represent Parris Island, where the training takes place of our troops on the east coast, and I have been there in 3 days of parallel training; and it was an extraordinary opportunity again to see the dedication of these young people.

I also represent the Beaufort Naval Hospital adjacent to McIntyre Air National Guard Base, Sully Air Force Base. I, again, over and over again, had the opportunity to meet young people, to meet people who are so dedicated in protecting our country.

Indeed, it was 2 weeks ago today that I had the opportunity to go on a delegation with the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA) with the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and we had the opportunity to meet with the incoming Iraqi police being trained. We had the opportunity to meet with the new government officials, the Prime Minister, Ayad Allawi, and also President Ghazi al-Yawer. It was very encouraging.

The Prime Minister is a real hero. He himself was a victim of Saddam Hussein's attempted assassination a number of years ago. I have heard it described he was virtually cut in half, but he recovered. His wife, though, did not. She had a permanent nervous breakdown. And so we have a very brave person serving as Prime Minister in Ayad Allawi promoting the people of Iraq to build a civil society.

Many of us had the opportunity, thanks to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), to meet with President Ghazi al-Yawer. He is a graduate of George Washington University; and he announced to us that he is an optimist,

that he believes a civil society can be established in Iraq, and I believe that we have seen in the past 10 days, since he took power and since the Prime Minister took power on the 28th, that, indeed, they are working to rebuild a civil society in Iraq.

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) and I were in on the same meeting, and that was a wonderful opportunity. What he and I heard in terms of the appreciation of the Iraqi people, the desire of their people and their government to be free, the incredible gratitude that they feel towards our soldiers. Does the gentleman read anything like that in our national media? Does the gentleman hear that on the news at night?

What my colleague and I heard both there and in Iraq, we do not hear it. That is what the people of America need to hear and see, because that is true. That is what is happening in Iraq. That is the contribution. That is how the people who are receiving this help, particularly from men and women in uniform, that is the true response.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. It really is, and particularly with President al-Yawer. He was so outspoken in his appreciation for the dedication of our young people, of families who have lost heroes, who are protecting American people; and it was just heartfelt. It was the same heartfelt feeling that we actually did see, thank goodness, with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan, who was here about 3 weeks ago to express the appreciation of the people of Afghanistan for their liberation and their ability now for probably the first time in history to establish a civil society.

When I say "civil society," I am talking about one that looks out for the people and the country, and one of the highlights was to meet with the minister of health in Iraq. He had previously been the minister of education, and he was telling us one by one of the progress being made in regard to education.

Thousands of schools have been renovated. These are not elegant schools with gymnasiums. These are largely one-room schoolhouses that have been repainted, many of them by the American military, with desks and with blackboards. In fact, 1¼ million book bags were distributed to the young people of Iraq from the United States Agency For International Development.

Additionally, he told us that there are 293,000 teachers in Iraq. What we hear when we read the paper is that people are unemployed. That is all we hear; but there are 293,000 teachers, and it was incredible to me.

I asked the minister what is the percentage of young people who are school age going to school; and he told us it was around 90 percent, maybe exceeding 90 percent, and that, in fact, in April when there was an upsurge in vi-

olence, the young people still came to school, and they were brought by their parents.

I find this encouraging because we know another fact is that there were 60 million new textbooks distributed in the last year. This is incredibly important. The textbooks previously had been idolatrous of the dictator Saddam Hussein. They had virtually identified him as a reincarnated Nebuchadnezer. That was an insult to their intelligence; but if that is all they read, that is all they read, that is all they heard.

Now, of course, we have all seen, as we have visited, the satellite dishes. Those were illegal under the Hussein dictatorship. Those of us who have visited, everywhere we look we see satellite dishes where it may not be all we want them to see, but they do have choices that they did not have before. So a civil society, I think, is being established.

Then the bravery that is exhibited. The gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER) was very interested that we visit a hospital; and we visited a hospital, and we visited with the American troops, and we visited with Iraqi patriots. In particular, there was a city councilman who was there who had been severely injured and his young son was there, and he was telling us that his brother had been killed in the same attack a week ago prior to us meeting with him and that another son, somebody had left a package at their home and when he picked it up, it was a small bomb that blew his right hand off. How brave that he persisted in trying to build a civil society.

It just brings to mind, particularly here in the week of the 4th of July, of the sacrifices of the persons who signed the Declaration of Independence. They were not greeted with riches and with a warm response by the ruling elite at that time. They lost so much, and now we have got people who are indeed promoting the establishment of a democracy.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I know both the gentlemen mentioned going through the air base in Germany, Ramstein Air Base, and going to the medical facility in Germany where our wounded troops are taken before they are brought back to Walter Reed or Bethesda; and in doing that this time, just this last week, I was reminded very strongly about what we displaced in Iraq when we got rid of Saddam Hussein, because one of the lead surgeons there had a videotape that was done by Saddam Hussein's agents as they amputated the hands of businessmen who they brought to the prison and decided, because Saddam Hussein had figured that they had not done enough for business lately and they had not brought the economy up sufficiently in Iraq in a certain period of time, he had their hands surgically amputated to give a little motivation to the other members of the business community. I imagine

it did motivate them. It probably motivated them to get out of there as quickly as they could.

When I see the discussion about Iraq peel off into some type of a debating society over whether or not we have found weapons of mass destruction lately, I pull that picture out of my top drawer that has all those Kurdish mothers spread out across the hillside dead, where they were killed in mid-stride holding their children, holding their little babies, where that chemical hit them and appeared to kill them just where they stood, and those pictures were as poignant and dramatic as any photos I saw of any of the death camps in Germany.

I was reminded once again of what we displaced when we displaced Saddam Hussein; and certainly, we are going to have, as the years go by and more mass graves are discovered and more people come forth with their stories, it is going to become very evident that the United States of America acted when others were afraid to act, when they were intimidated or when they were incentivized not to act because of economic situations, like the French who thought they were going to get all the contracts for the big oil fields, and perhaps others who thought that they somehow would have a good political or economic relationship with Iraq.

The United States acted, and we acted on behalf of humanity because it is humanity which rejects cutting people's hands off because they have not raised the economic standard; or shooting thousands of Shiites in the back of the head and bulldozing them into open trenches because they would resist Saddam Hussein's regime; or gassing Kurdish citizens in their little villages in northern Iraq. That is resisted by humanity, and the only nation which really took action along with our great British allies and Australia allies and several others brought something to the battle but not a lot, was the United States of America, and I think we can all be proud of that leadership.

It is going to be a rocky, tough road. They live in a tough neighborhood, and there is lots of danger for that new government to face. In fact, I think the biggest challenge for their armed forces is, number one, just keep their government alive, because there are lots of predators out there that want to take them down. I think we are going to make it and we are going to have an Iraq which is benign with respect to its relationship with respect to the United States, and that is going to accrue to the benefit of lots of Americans in generations to come.

I would be happy to yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES).

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, just a couple of quick points.

Again, the gentleman referred to the Iraqi businessmen whose hands were cut off. They came here to the Capitol of the United States of America and had a press conference. I did not see

anything about that anywhere near the front page, simply to make the point.

Mr. HUNTER. No. In fact, you know what I saw. The Washington Post had a front page article about the prison mess, and what they devoted the front and center to their front page on one day was that some prisoners in Guantanamo had asked for sugar in their tea, and they were told it was going to be a while before they got sugar for their tea. So they thought that was quite an abuse, and so instead of putting in an article about people who had their hands amputated by Saddam Hussein, they wanted to devote that very important space to prisoners who did not get sugar in their tea.

Mr. HAYES. The issue of weapons of mass destruction, let me for just a moment quote what the administration said about weapons of mass destruction.

The New York Times reported November 14, 1997, in a meeting that the White House was deciding to prepare the country for war. According to the Times, the decision was made to begin a public campaign to do interviews on the Sunday morning television news programs to inform the American people of the dangers of biological warfare and Saddam Hussein.

During this time, The Washington Post reported that President Clinton specifically directed Secretary of Defense Cohen to raise the profile of biological and chemical threat.

Again, I point out, this was the former administration, not because of partisan politics but because of the unanimous consensus that existed about the weapons of mass destruction.

On November 16, Cohen made a widely reported appearance on ABC's "This Week" in which he placed a 5-pound bag of sugar on the table and stated that that amount of anthrax would destroy at least half the population in Washington, D.C.

Cohen began his November 25 briefing on the "Pentagon Report" by showing a picture of a Kurdish mother and child that had been gassed by Saddam's Army. A bit later, standing beside the gruesome image, he described death on a mass scale: one drop of vx nerve agent on your finger will produce death in a matter of just a few moments.

Now, the U.N. believes that Saddam may have produced as much as 200 tons of vx; and this would, of course, be theoretically enough to kill every man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth.

He then sketched a massive chemical attack on an American city, on and on and on.

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Steven Hayes has written, by the way, no kin of mine. So I am not promoting my relative's book. Not a relative. I want to make that clear for the record.

Mr. HUNTER. He may make that point to you when you try to get a part of the royalty.

Mr. HAYES. That is probably true.

The book is very accurate, very concise, and there is also a condensed 7- or 8-page article on where the connection between terrorists around the world was so clearly made and tied into Saddam Hussein, his government, and their effort to promote, to build, and to harbor terrorists. So clear. So if anybody has any doubt in their mind, simply read that article, which is in the Weekly Standard, or read the book. The evidence is clear. It cannot be denied.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Chairman, it should be pointed out that, indeed, a certain gas projectile was discovered, that is a chemical weapon, and, additionally, mustard gas has been discovered, projectiles in the country of Iraq, which had previously been in the jurisdiction, obviously, of Saddam Hussein. It was clearly indicated that, of course, chemical weapons were being used against the Kurdish population by Saddam Hussein.

It is equally significant that the anthrax that was never explained as to what happened to it or where it may be, could fit in the back of a medium-sized U-haul, but yet it would be sufficient to have a horrible impact. More than the known population on the East Coast could have been killed by such an attack if it were widely dispersed, which would be difficult, but we would not want to find out. That is why we took this action. And this war in Afghanistan, the conflict in theater in Iraq, this is to protect the American people.

My colleague from California brought up our allies, but this needs to be brought out. We have 32 nations that have sent troops to Iraq. I am particularly grateful that 2 weeks ago I had the opportunity to meet a soldier from Latvia. Not in our lifetime would we ever dream that we would be meeting with a soldier from the Independent Republic of Latvia, which is now a free republic. Not any longer is it a forced member of the U.S.S.R., the Soviet Union. Now Latvia itself is a member of NATO.

It should also be noted, and it is just amazing how this is not picked up, when we express concern about NATO's involvement, we should be pointing out that 16 of the 26 members in NATO have troops serving in Iraq today. I want to particularly congratulate, because I have worked very closely as the co-chair of the Congressional Bulgaria Caucus, I want to thank the Republic of Bulgaria. I had the opportunity in Kabul, Afghanistan, to meet with the Bulgarian ambassador and commander of Bulgarian troops serving in Afghanistan.

I am very pleased there is a battalion of 495 Bulgarians serving in Iraq today. That is the largest foreign placement of troops in the nearly 1,300-year history of Bulgaria. For the first time, Bulgaria has invited a foreign country, the United States, to establish a base in their country, an air base at Burgas.

This is incredible, because every other base that has been established in Bulgaria has been done involuntarily, not at the request of the national assembly.

So this is an historic time where, because of the veterans who have made this possible, I believe there is a greater spread of democracy today than in the history of the world. The way I phrased it, too, I have had the opportunity to visit with our troops, and Dutch troops and Australian and Polish troops at Bishkek, Kyrgystan; at Kharshi-Khanabad, Uzbekistan; and Bagram, Afghanistan, and all of these are former Soviet air bases that had been built to fight the United States, which are now American and coalition air bases fighting the terrorists and winning the war on terrorism.

I think it is a remarkable time for us to celebrate the successes of the American military that are unparalleled in history, and I am very proud of what is being done. I am very proud of the successes, and I am confident the young people who are today on the front lines are going to persist and, with the resolve of the American people and around the world, succeed.

Mr. HUNTER. The gentleman is absolutely right. And this Cold War was won by American service personnel. I look at Korea and Vietnam as two of the important battles in that war and battles which helped to bring that war to a successful conclusion.

The gentleman makes a great point about people who used to be behind the Iron Curtain now serving side-by-side with Americans. And I am reminded also that troops from Nicaragua and El Salvador, which were the centers of the so-called Contra wars during the 1980s, when America's liberals said Ronald Reagan should stay out of Central America; that if the Soviets want to have an influence in Central America, which they were having with the Communist Sandinista and the FMLN in Salvador, let them have it, said the liberals, and let us stay out of Central America; we cannot possibly win that war. And of course they brought back the old Vietnam thing, they said you are going to get bogged down in another Vietnam. Today, we have fragile democracies in each of those countries, and they have sent troops to stand side-by-side with Americans in Iraq to try to bring freedom to yet another country.

I was told, incidentally, that the Salvadorans in particular have fought fiercely in the Iraq theater; that they are excellent fighters and they very much support the coalition, and that they have brought a measure of strong support to our operation there. So I thank the gentleman for bringing that up because I think that is an important one.

When Ronald Reagan was bringing down the Wall, and when he met that first move of force by the Russians during his administration, when the Soviet Union started to ring Western Eu-

rope with SS-20 missiles and Ronald Reagan started to push in ground launch cruise missiles and Pershing missiles into Europe, the liberal commentators across the world said, essentially, now you have gone and done it; we will never have peace with the Soviet Union, and we have to get this Ronald Reagan out of there.

Yet, by meeting the strength of the Soviet Union with American strength, the President produced a situation where at one point the Russians picked up the phone and said, can we talk? And when they started talking, they talked not about a negotiated settlement but they talked really about the disassembly of the Soviet empire brought about by American strength.

I think this operation in Iraq, while it is tough and hard and very dangerous, is going to produce a good result in that very difficult part of the world.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Chairman, as we sit here and call attention to our incredible allies, I think that we may have forgotten momentarily the Italians, who have been incredibly courageous, along with the Hungarians, the South Koreans, and the list, as the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) pointed out, is 32-plus members.

My colleague was talking about these agents, biological weapons, chemicals, but what I mentioned was the previous administration in the 1990s. What has happened in June 24, of 2004? Charles Duelfer, head of the Iraq weapons inspection team, announced his group had uncovered at least 10 more artillery shells filled with banned chemical weapons from the regime of Saddam Hussein. I have not read that prominently in any paper or heard it on the nightly news.

Duelfer announced that his team is finding new WMD evidence almost every day, and I quote. "A roadside bomb, discovered May 15, contained chemicals that when combined formed sarin gas. All such weapons were supposed to have been destroyed. Chemical munitions were probably stored with conventional arms at some of the thousands of weapon depots located throughout Iraq. Military officials have uncovered some 8,700 weapon depots and continue to find new ones, and estimate the weapon depots in Iraq contain between 650,000 and 1 million tons of arms."

How do you kill 400,000 people and not refer to weapons of mass destruction? It defies common sense.

Mr. HUNTER. Well, I thank the gentleman for pointing that out, and I think that the American service personnel who are serving in Iraq, because of what the gentleman has mentioned, are undergoing enormous hardship because they always have to be on guard for the possibilities that other shells, for example, that have nerve agents like the one that was picked up as an IED in Baghdad and was partly ex-

ploded to the point where the people who were the team that were neutralizing the shell got sick, there is always a possibility that more shells are going to be taken out of that particular load or cache of weapons. And that will be a danger to American troops. So I thank the gentleman for bringing that point up.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my chairman would kindly yield to me for 30 seconds.

Mr. HUNTER. I would be happy to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Chairman, I notice that you have about 20 minutes more left in this hour, and I believe that the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE), myself, and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT), as well as a couple of other Members have an hour coming up. I found it very interesting, the conversation. Obviously, we may have some differing views on this, but I wonder if the chairman might consider that perhaps next week or the balance of the week at some time, that we could, those of us interested in this issue and have the articulate views, as my colleague and the other Members do, might consider combining our hour sometime and having a discussion?

Mr. HUNTER. I would be happy to. I would say to my friend that I would be happy to.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Maybe we could discuss that off the floor and perhaps we might benefit the whole American public by the kind of discussion that could take place.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to do that with my friend. I cannot guarantee the American public is going to make a sell-out crowd for us, but I would be happy to do that. Sure.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. I am sure with this trio that is here this evening and those we could bring to the discussion, particularly those of my esteemed colleagues on the Committee on Armed Services, I think we might get an audience that might not necessarily be able to follow the hearings that the chairman has put together so far.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy and we will talk about it and perhaps something good in terms of dialogue could result.

Mr. HUNTER. I look forward to it.

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman from Hawaii will yield.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Well, the time belongs to the Chairman.

Mr. HUNTER. I would be happy to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to call attention to our friends here, and anyone watching, that my first real experience with the Committee on Armed Services was with the gentleman from Hawaii. We were dealing with an issue in Bosnia which demanded bipartisan attention, and when it comes to supporting the men and women in uniform, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) is there. He will be there with you.

So I thought it was appropriate to call attention to a very fine memory, of many that I have, of the gentleman from Hawaii.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful, Mr. Chairman. I will yield any time to take that kind of compliment.

Mr. HUNTER. You better leave on that one. That is a good one.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Can I leave now?

Mr. HUNTER. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I want to also join in thanking the gentleman from Hawaii for his constructive suggestion.

But I want to reiterate again too that the war we are into, this global war on terrorism, is not something the United States sought. It is my humble opinion that the first attack was really in 1979, with the attack on our embassy in Tehran. We can all remember the signs that were carried at that time were "death to America." It does not need a discussion. That is what the intent is. And the reason for this feeling is because the United States represents freedom of association, of speech, as we just saw, freedom of women to participate in society, and freedom of media. All of this is being opposed by people who want to construct a 14th century life-style.

This is not a religious war. To me, it is a group of extremists who, as we saw last week, there was a heinous suicide bomber who attacked a Shiite mosque in Pakistan. Imagine just going straight into a mosque and killing 20 people. This is just something that has to be faced, and we either face the enemy overseas or we will again see them here in the United States, as we did on September 11.

September 11 was the culmination of a direct attack on the United States in 1993 on the World Trade Center, a direct attack on our embassies in 1998, at embassies all throughout Africa, and then, of course, the infamous attack on U.S.S. *Cole* in Yemen in the year 2000, and finally the attack of September 11, 2001. America is responding.

And I am very grateful that just as after World War II we helped rebuild Germany so it would not be a breeding ground for communism, we are helping to rebuild Iraq. I am sorry that it does not get the attention it should. It is probably just dull to hear that there is freedom of the press and media in Iraq. It is dull to hear the schools have been reopened. It is dull to hear the hospitals have all been reopened and the health clinics are available. But it is not dull. It is creating a civil society that protects the American people. We were able to protect the American people and defeat communism, and I am confident we can do the same thing in defeating terrorism.

I am so happy the gentleman brought up Ronald Reagan. It was 20 years ago virtually this minute that he was attempting to win the Cold War by putting Pershing missiles in Western Eu-

rope. Millions of people demonstrated against that in the United States and Western Europe. It ultimately led, again, to our victory.

I had the extraordinarily opportunity Sunday to meet with people at our church who are from Russia, and I was telling them how incredible it was for me to be there with them, because 15 years ago we were told that they like living under communism; that due to their serf background, they liked being slaves; that they really did not want to have to make decisions of who to elect and how to elect, what jobs to take, how much money to earn, whether they could buy a car or not; that they really enjoyed living in oppression.

□ 2045

We know that is not true. The dear Russians that I met with on Sunday said how much they appreciated what President Reagan and the American people have done to provide for their liberation. The same analogy applies to the people of Iraq and Afghanistan. It is such a positive time to see what our troops are doing.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY), also a great member of the Committee on Armed Services.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Armed Services. I know if the troops who are so bravely defending us, our liberty in Iraq and Afghanistan, if they have any opportunity to read a newspaper or listen to a radio or watch television, I know they know that if there is any greater friend than the chairman of the House Committee on Armed Services, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), it is possibly the Commander in Chief, George W. Bush. I thank the gentleman for giving me an opportunity to say a few words tonight during this important hour.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, the 108th Congress appropriated some \$187 billion to Operation Iraqi Freedom. \$18.5 billion was to restore the infrastructure of this Middle Eastern country long neglected by their dictator, Saddam Hussein. While Saddam Hussein was incurring huge debts, some say as much as \$100 billion to build up his own personal military and to construct numerous palaces, compounds to his own glory and edification, those of us on both sides of the aisle of the committee, we were there and saw these palaces. While at the same time the typical Iraqi citizen, especially the Shiite majority and the Kurds, was not only suffering from a lack of the basic necessities of life, but they were also being killed and tortured with reckless abandonment.

Mr. Speaker, I could talk more time than I am allotted about how we are expending this \$18.5 billion appropriation to restore the infrastructure, the needs, basic needs such as water and sewer plants, electricity, and schools; but let me use the time that I have got

to discuss something that I know a little bit about and that is called health care.

I am a physician member of the House of Representatives; and along with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, I care deeply about the health care, most basic health care needs of the impoverished Iraqi people.

Mr. Speaker, let us do a little before and after comparison on health care expenditures in Iraq. Saddam Hussein's regime provided only \$16 million for the ministry of health in 2002. That was less than \$1 per person. This is a 23 to 24 million population country. The Iraqi medical system severely lacked medical equipment and capabilities. Doctors' salaries were about \$20 a month.

Today, Iraq's 2004 budget for health care is \$950 million, a \$934 million increase over 2002. All 240 hospitals and more than 1,200 health clinics are now open. The minister of health assumed full independent authority on March 28, 2004, and the minister of health is addressing drug shortages by making emergency drug purchases. Health care spending in Iraq has increased 30 times over its prewar levels, and children are receiving crucial vaccinations for the first time. Over 5 million children have been immunized for measles, mumps, and rubella. Every child in our country gets that basic right. It is estimated that 85 percent of Iraqi children now have been immunized.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I was listening to some discussion on this floor of the House earlier and a member on the other side of the aisle spoke about fairness. He used that little cute way of saying the F word, and the F word being fairness, and said it was not fair for us to be spending money on the health of the Iraqi people when it is estimated 40 million Americans do not have health insurance. But, Mr. Speaker, they have health care. They may not have health insurance, but they have basic health care; and I would remind my colleagues on September 11, 2001, 3,000 of our citizens, citizens of other countries, had good jobs with health care and health insurance, but they were killed. They are not with us today. Their families no longer have their presence, and yet they had great health care. So it is hugely important that we provide this infrastructure, this basic health care need to the Iraqi people.

It would be unconscionable to free them from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and leave them in poverty and squalor without having these basic health care needs met, because we would just be creating yet another dictator to take Saddam Hussein's place. I think it is entirely appropriate that we spend this money to restore the infrastructure, including the health care, the basic health care needs, of the Iraqi people. With that I yield back to my chairman.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr.

GINGREY) for the point he has made. It is a very important point. That is the message that I think has gone out to people around the world. They really understand the goodness of this country. Interestingly, they might not understand by watching our own television, but they have enough experiences with their own families and with their own view of the world to know that the United States is a good country.

I am reminded of a couple of years ago when my parents were in Manila in the Philippines, and the Philippines were undertaking demonstrations against the United States. The demonstration leadership would walk over to the line of Filipinos waiting to get visas to come into the United States, and they would hire people to take hold of signs that said "Down with the United States," or "The United States out of the Philippines." They would hire them to demonstrate against the United States and after they demonstrated awhile, the demonstrators would then give back their signs to the organizers, and they would retake their position in line waiting for their visa to the United States that they just demonstrated against.

I think it is clear to the Iraqi people that we are the good guys. I think they are reflecting on this now as we have turned this government over. They have been ruled by a government for so long that was very self-serving. Its own survival and its own enrichment were the major goals that it undertook. Here is the United States, which has expended an enormous amount of human capital and our economic capital in this part of the world, and yet what we are asking them to do is be free; be free, grow your economy, become prosperous, become a member of the world community, which does not oppress its people; and it is our hope if you have a free government, you are not going to oppress other people.

The Iraqis are going to have to be tough to maintain this government. There are going to be bombs and explosions going off in Iraq for a long time to come. If the pouring in of resources could stop explosions from going off, we would not have explosions in Israel right now, but that is a fact of life in that part of the world. It is going to have to be a tough government with some grit. They are going to have to develop a military that has the capability of protecting that government and protecting this running chance at freedom that we have given the Iraqi people.

Maybe it will not work; but from the beginning of time to the end of time, the only time when the Iraqi people will have had a real chance at freedom is when the Americans were there, and that is something we can all be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON).

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate some

other heroes who are serving our families, and that is the families and employers. The families are so dedicated to our servicemembers who are serving overseas, men and women. We all know first hand of circumstances where families are making sacrifices. Additionally, we have got family support groups that we have community support for. Anyone who wants to help members of our Guard and Reserve, in any phone book will be the listing of an armory. They can contact the unit clerk or the AST and offer to assist in some way.

Also, employers. We were very fortunate 2 weeks ago to have a hearing put together by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE), himself a retired Marine colonel. It was brought to our attention how employers are coming to bat for the people who have been mobilized and deployed. There are some indications of obvious problems; but I was told, and during the hearing it came out, for every one problem, there are nine good stories of where businesses have come forward to assist their employees who have been deployed.

They know the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act, now the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, will protect our servicemembers. Additionally, there are reemployment rights that will accrue to the people in the Guard and Reserve. We are all here to help make sure that they have the jobs that they had when they left, they have their seniority, that they have the ability to blend back in and assimilate right away into American society. But it is the employers who are doing this voluntarily.

Again, families and employers deserve a great deal of credit in helping us win the war on terror.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman has described something very important to our country and that is all of us pulling together. That means we are pulling together whether you are part of the family and you know your husband or loved one is going to have to take off and spend some time overseas and you are going to try to pull through those difficult times, or if your neighbors are going to help out or relatives are going to help out. Or as the gentleman has said, employers are going to help out. This country has got to pull together. We have done a lot of that.

One thing that the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES) has worked on so much is American businesses pulling together. That means if you are a business, you are a prime contractor in this country and you can buy a piece of material or a machine tool from another country but you have the opportunity to buy one from Americans, and employ Americans by your purchases, create jobs in America by your purchases, take a look at that and that is something that the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES) has been encouraging our American businesses to do. That is part of pulling together.

We are going to have to all do that with the same spirit that we used to win the Cold War and World War II.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES).

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the effort that the chairman has put into that because a strong industrial defense base is the key to our future. With economic security and good jobs in this country, then we are able financially to support our wonderful military.

A couple of quick things. President Bush has stood tall for freedom in America and freedom around the world. He said, "Democracy is the surest way to build a society of justice. If justice is the goal, then democracy is the answer." President Bush has stood tall for our troops in Iraq. What do the Iraqis say about what is happening? Well, 68 percent has confidence in the interim Iraqi Government, and 79 percent think the interim government will make things better for the Iraqis.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, mentioning the President reminded me of something Saddam Hussein said, because the other day when he got to have his say in court, which is something he never gave the people that he oppressed, he said words to the effect that he would not be there if it were not for George Bush. I will not repeat the adjectives that he used to describe President Bush, but when he said he would not be there if it were not for President Bush, or words to that effect, he was right, George Bush and about 300,000 great Americans in uniform. The point is we have to be the leaders of the free world. If the free world were not led by the United States, I do not think there would be a leader in the free world.

Mr. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, President Bush stood up for freedom, as well he should.

Just a couple of weeks ago at President Reagan's funeral here in Washington, I had the unique privilege of standing in line waiting to walk by the casket of former President Reagan with Mikhail Gorbachev.

□ 2100

They called Reagan a cowboy; but Mikhail Gorbachev, his adversary at that time, was at his funeral saying that that man stood up for freedom, and he won the Cold War, just like President Bush is standing up and winning the war on terrorism and our troops are making that happen.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES). It must have taken a lot of grit for Mikhail Gorbachev to have all of the previous speakers or the speakers at that ceremony talk about how Ronald Reagan equipped him; but, you know, he put up with that and then paid his respects to President Reagan. And I think there is a message there, and that is that the goodness of America comes through, and ultimately it persuades others to follow

the path of freedom. I thank the gentleman for his comments.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, we are out of time. We would like to yield back the balance of our time.

IRAQ WATCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GINGREY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, as you know, and our friends know, we have been engaged in a conversation for some months now with regard to what we have come to term the Iraq Watch; and I was very pleased to note that my good friend and esteemed colleague, the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), indicated in the last hour that he and other Members were occupying, that they would be pleased at some point, perhaps in the future, to work out an opportunity for a dialogue, not necessarily a debate, but a conversation among friends with respect to Iraq and its implications for the United States, perhaps even combining hours. I do not know what the rules are precisely on that, and I do not ask for a ruling on that right now, Mr. Speaker; but at some point we hope to be able to do that, hopefully for the benefit of the membership and for those members of the American public and others that may be tuning in to our Special Orders.

For this evening's opportunity, however, I wanted to begin our discussion tonight with some references and observations over the so-called handover of sovereignty. I think, Mr. Speaker, you might agree that with respect to Iraq, and unfortunately not only Iraq, there tends to be opportunities for the media in particular to seize on certain phrases. They become almost phrases of art. These phrases then substitute for a whole panoply of analysis that might otherwise usefully take place.

In this instance, the phrase that I am referring to is the so-called "handover of sovereignty." Handover of sovereignty, what that means is not clear to me at this stage.

What I did observe during our break was a ceremony which took place under very, very strained circumstances. The television news was suddenly filled with the ominous music, the drumbeats, the portentous rhythms that seem to indicate that something of spectacular import is about to happen. Breaking news. Stentorian voices, a sound, and then suddenly we are told, well, we are going to go to the handover of sovereignty in Iraq. It is to take place in secret. It is to take place with a pool reporter there, apparently a pool camera. It is in some secret room somewhere in the green zone, presumably, I guess, in one of the palaces, or what are referred to as palaces, in Baghdad; and, suddenly,

there is Ambassador Bremer and some folks there with handshakes and pieces of paper passed back and forth. No real idea of what it is all about other than smiles and handshakes all around.

And suddenly sovereignty ostensibly has been transferred or handed over. That it took place in secret, that it took place ostensibly to prevent terrorist activity from disrupting it probably speaks more about what the handover was actually all about and whether or not the word "sovereignty" might properly apply.

In both instances, I think not. There was no handover of sovereignty. How can there be sovereignty when you do not control your armed forces, when the first pronouncements of your ostensibly sovereign government involve the possibility of imposing martial law on your own people and indications that the governing authority, that is to say the Coalition Provisional Authority under Mr. Bremer, still absent him in person, is going to be in charge of the military activities, presumably, according to this handover of sovereignty ceremony, under some kind of group discussion terminology.

Again, I fail to understand exactly how this "partnership," which was referred to between the so-called sovereign Government of Iraq and the Government of the United States through its military, is supposed to take place.

It is unclear to me that the questions that I asked of Assistant Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz in our Committee on Armed Services hearings, unclear to me whether these questions were answered. I simply said, "Who is in charge? Who has the authority?" And what I got was the usual dissembling and allusions to the idea of group discussions taking place. I am not quite sure how one responds to military situations in the arena of group discussions, but I suppose it is possible.

My own thought at that time was, and I said at that time and repeat again tonight, that my perception was that at the turnover of sovereignty, at least as best I was able to understand that term, the American military would be set adrift on a desert sea and would find itself in a situation of being the first responders in an Iraqi crisis and that we would be uncertain as to who exactly was issuing the orders and under what circumstances they would be obeyed.

This constitutes, for me, a crisis of another character, a crisis for us to answer; and in that context it is clear to me that the handover of sovereignty amounts to little more than a propaganda device meant to try to distance the political consequences and implications of our occupation from the political realities as the election approaches.

Obviously, people will have to make their own minds up on that score; but in relation to that then, among the first pronouncements of this sovereign government was that under consider-

ation was a possible policy of amnesty and that the amnesty would extend to those people who had murdered American troops, those people who had been involved in the insurgency that has taken place since the hostilities or major hostilities were pronounced at an end, i.e., mission accomplished by Mr. Bush some time ago on the infamous aircraft carrier stunt.

And subsequent to that, obviously this insurgency, again, this is a term that has been adopted by the media uncritically, has resulted in numerous deaths and wounding. Most members of, certainly, the Committee on Armed Services and other Members of the House of Representatives and members of the subcommittees of the other body have traveled both in their districts and here in Washington and in Germany to hospital situations where we have been able to speak with and, hopefully, bring some measure of comfort and support to members of the military who have been wounded, members of the military and others, including civilian employees. But all that has taken place since this pronouncement that the war was essentially over, that the major activities surrounding the invasion was over; and now we find that this sovereign government is contemplating offering amnesty to those people.

Now, if that is in fact what this has come to, I think the implications and consequences are serious indeed. There is no question in my mind that there will be some very serious dialogue taking place in this Nation if that is what this was all about, the opportunity for a government that has come into being solely as a result of the activities of the United States of America subsequent to the invasion, including and subsequent to the invasion of Iraq; and now we find a general amnesty being contemplated.

That was never discussed, to my knowledge, with any members of the Committee on Armed Services. It was never discussed, to my knowledge, with members of the subcommittees of Congress generally as to whether or not that was something that we could abide. One would think that at a minimum this sovereign government in Iraq would have the courtesy, if only out of respect for those who have died and those who have been wounded on their behalf, to at least engage in some form of a dialogue with the United States in regard to that possible amnesty.

I see my friend from Washington is about to ask for the floor, and I would be happy to yield to him.

Mr. INSLEE. Well, I appreciate this, and I would like to contrast the phony, alleged sovereignty in Iraq with the real sovereignty and democracy in the United States; and this is a thought I had while sitting on the West Lawn of the Capitol watching the fireworks that were so spectacular on July 4th over the Washington Monument. And as I was looking at the fireworks, I was