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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MACK. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

A NEW EMERGING THREAT TO FREEDOM IN LATIN AMERICA: HUGO CHAVEZ

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

Mr. MACK. Madam Speaker, I ran for Congress on the ideals of freedom security and prosperity because these are the ideals that define America, and they are the necessary ingredients for a better quality of life for people around the world.

And though freedom is on the march in many places around world, in Latin America, a resurgence of socialists, communists and anti-freedom movements and alliances represent a new emerging threat that must be stopped.

At the root of Latin America's renewed anti-Americanism is Venezuela's Hugo Chavez. In the years since Hugo Chavez first took office as a democratically elected leader, he has retreated from the ideals of freedom, security, and prosperity and began his own march toward oppression and socialism modeled after his mentor, Fidel Castro.

And let me give a few examples: In Hugo Chavez's Venezuela, there is no free press. Just state-controlled, anti-American, anti-freedom propaganda. There is no freedom of speech, no freedom of dissent, and no freedom to stand in opposition to the Chavez regime. Just days ago, for example, several leaders of the opposition group Sumate were charged with treason and conspiracy simply for accepting money from the National Endowment for Democracy to help educate their fellow citizens about Venezuela's constitutional referendum process. In Hugo Chavez's Venezuela, the government owns the country's key industries and controls the economy, the flow of capital, jobs and opportunity. Hugo Chavez holds the hopes, dreams and opportunities for an entire nation firmly in his fists.

In the years since he came to power, Hugo Chavez has hijacked the courts and installed his cronies and allies to manipulate the country's constitution and legal system. He has forged a dangerous alliance with Fidel Castro and is now receiving military and intelligence assistance and training from Castro's government. He has acquired 100,000 machine guns from Russia and admitted to trying to acquire nuclear technology from Iran. And he has threatened to end diplomatic relations with the United States.

Madam Speaker, Hugo Chavez is an enemy of freedom who threatens the balance of power in our hemisphere. Today I call on the United States to pursue a three point plan that will promote freedom, security and prosperity for the people of Venezuela.

First, the United States should promote the creation of institutions that will foster a free press, free markets, and the freedom of speech and religion and free and fair elections for Venezuela, including the establishment of a Venezuelan counterpart of Radio and TV Marti.

Second, the United States should establish a Venezuelan Security Zone that will isolate Chavez and limit his ability to destabilize Latin America. This new zone would restrict Hugo Chavez's ability to purchase arms, nuclear information and technologies, and weapons of mass destruction. It would also make it more difficult for Hugo Chavez to enter into commerce, trade or alliances with other nations led by dictators and anti-American fanatics. And it would require the restoration of an independent judiciary committed to representing and protecting the rights of all Venezuelans.

Third, the United States should promote economic development in Venezuela through free markets, privatization and other means that will create lasting prosperity and opportunity for all Venezuelans.

Madam Speaker, President Reagan tore down a wall and liberated a generation. President Reagan once said, ''Freedom is a fragile thing and is never more than one generation away from extinction. It is not ours by inheritance; it must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation.''

President Reagan's steadfast commitment to freedom should have left a lasting lesson on all of us, but it did not. And the foreign policy debate in this body could not be more dramatic. Those on the left have demonstrated they believe in peace at any price even if that price is the loss of freedom.

Those of us on the right believe that freedom is worth fighting for and that together freedom, security, and prosperity will yield lasting peace.

Madam Speaker, make no mistake about it, Hugo Chavez is a threat. We must take him seriously, and we must act now.

THE WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, when the doctrine of preemptive war was first introduced, I suggested that it was unconscionable. Then the original case for war, weapons of mass destruction and a link between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, turned out to be erroneous at best and a pack of lies at the very worst.

So the war was immorally conceived. That is strike one. And deceptively marketed, that is strike two.

Strike three is the incompetence, the bungling, the repeated misjudgments in the execution of the war plan. From the dismantling of the Iraqi army to the lack of protective armor, to the failure to safeguard munitions and on and on.

The most recent proof of mismanagement appeared in a story in this weekend's Washington Post. Americans shooting at Americans in Iraq in the President's war that has become so mismanaged that I believe we are fighting ourselves. Have we become our own prisoners of war?

Now, finally, someone has begun to own up to the mistakes. Outgoing Pentagon official Douglas Feith in an interview with the Washington Post conceded that, among other things, we may have gone to Iraq with too light a force. The amazing part of that insiders' information and others like Mr. Feith's is that they have been cooking up the Iraq invasion since the early 1990s, more than a decade in the making. And they still could not get it right. It is inconceivable to me that we would send our troops into battle not only under-equipped but also undermanned.

One way the military has tried to keep troop levels down is by outsourcing many functions to private contractors. By some estimates, there are as many as 100,000 contractors roaming around Iraq. Many of them armed, apparently accountable to no one, acting independently of the military chain of command without any oversight, unbound by an official code of conduct.

Let us leave aside the issue of how contractors are paid much more than our troops or whose pockets are getting lined here. It has been documented that companies with close ties to the administration have been rewarded with these lucrative contracts, and the government has been, shall we say, very forgiving when their buddies overcharge and bilk American taxpayers.

But think about what it means to our troops on the ground to have well-healed contractors co-existing with underpaid active duty soldiers who are cogs in a rigid hierarchy, who are doing the unglamorous work, who are lucky if full health care benefits are awaiting them when they get home. The result is resentment, low morale, and a weakened military.

The only real solution is to bring our troops home from Iraq as soon as possible. I have been calling for an end to the occupation for many months now, and nothing has happened in Iraq that would force me to reconsider. Ending the war would be the beginning of a complete reassessment of U.S. national security policy. I have offered what I call SMART Security. That stands for Sensible, Multilateral, American Response to Terrorism.