men and women leave full-time jobs and their families to serve their country and protect our liberty. I want to very directly say, thank you. They are absolutely critical to the success of our mission in Iraq. Thanks to their bravery, their boldness, their courage—and that is more than 300,000 men and women of the American military in Iraq—we will prevail.

The 101st Airborne continues to make Tennessee and the United States of America proud. In Najaf, the 101st has helped return the city to normalcy by restoring water and electricity and will very soon participate in the delivery of humanitarian aid. They have also captured a senior Iraqi intelligence officer there.

The 101st helped to secure and continues to protect Baghdad International Airport. The first American aircraft landed at the airport yesterday.

In Karbala, the 101st Airborne overwhelmed the enemy. All Iraqi troops either fled or were killed. After cheers and waves from thousands of residents, citizens tore down a 25-foot bronze statue of Saddam Hussein.

Lastly, as quoted in this morning's Washington Post, MG David Petraeus told a rifle company while awarding two Purple Hearts:

> There is no greater commitment than that which is made by putting the American infantryman on the ground. You've really walked point for our Nation in this particular battle and this part of the campaign. You've performed brilliantly in countless ambiguous situations.

I close in saying thanks, thanks to those Tennessee citizen soldiers and citizen soldiers from all across the country, the National Guard troops and airmen, and thanks to all of our military personnel in Iraq and their families.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 5 p.m. Under the previous order, the time until 5 p.m. shall be equally divided between the Senator from Texas, Mrs. HUTCHISON, and the Democratic leader or their designees.

The Senator from Colorado.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I rise to speak under morning business that we set aside to salute our troops in Iraq. Initially, the plan that was put together by the military leadership was criticized, but today it is heralded as one of the great military strategies put together and will probably go down in the annals of military strategy. A number of individuals throughout the country are writing comments about our troops in Iraq.

I have an article written by Rick Atkinson, Washington Post Foreign Service, Thursday, April 3, 2003. It reads:

> An enthusiastic welcome for U.S. forces in Najaf turned jubilant today, as several thousand Iraqis braved sporadic firefights for what one Special Forces officer described as ''the Macy's Day parade,'' applauding a U.S. patrol that pushed close to a religious shrine at the center of the city.
>
> Four days after encircling Najaf, the 101st Airborne Division tightened the occupation today.
>
> Three infantry battalions rolled through the streets, including neighborhoods around the venerated tomb of Ali, son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad.
>
> Fourteen M1 Abrams tanks clanked up and down the southern boulevards, and another brigade of several thousand troops cinched the cordon on the north, seizing arms caches and swapping fire with elusive gunmen who are now believed to number no more than a few score.
>
> In the midst of the fighting, a U.S. patrol approached Ali's tomb attempting to contact local clerics but were met instead by a crowd. Lt. Col. Chris Hughes, a battalion commander in the 1st Brigade, said, ''We waited about an hour and a half, and the hair on the back of my neck began to stand up. The crowd got bigger and bigger, so we pulled back out. But it was like the liberation of Paris.''

I state our troops have been mindful of the Iraqi culture during the push north toward Baghdad. Our soldiers have been helping guard a religious shrine in southern Iraq. The temple is called the Temple of Ziggurat and was built 4,000 years ago. Many know the site as the birthplace of Abraham. This is just one example of the way our men and women were respectful of the rich heritage of the Iraqi people and committed to helping them preserve their legacy.

I have a picture of a small Iraqi child giving a thumbs-up to our American soldiers because he recognizes the great job our men and women are doing in Iraq and recognizes the fact it is his freedom we are talking about. They are fighting not only to protect America but to provide an environment where freedom will thrive in a new Iraq.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I would like to continue to talk a bit about the most important item before us, the issue most of us have on our minds, and that is our forces in Iraq, the efforts that are being made there and the reasons for those efforts. Certainly, at this time all of us are thinking about that.

No one has ever said that this fight would be easy. Now that our troops are in Baghdad, we acknowledge that perhaps the toughest part of the war to disarm Saddam Hussein is likely still ahead of us. But so far Operation Iraqi Freedom certainly has been a tremendous success, and I think all of us share in pride at the actions of our men and women who are there and our leaders who have caused these actions to take place and have managed them. Our Operation Iraqi Freedom has been a tribute to the skills of the men and women in uniform and their leadership.

I spent some time this morning with a group of fourth graders. These youngsters have a pretty good idea of what is going on in Iraq and, to some extent, why we are there. Obviously, they have been talking with their parents. Obviously, they have been watching TV. But I thought it was amazing how much these young kids seemed to understand. I thought that was great.

Certainly our hearts break for every life that is lost and every soul missing on the battlefield. We thank our stars that the losses so far have been relatively light. That, of course, doesn't make it any easier for the families who have suffered the losses.

In less than 3 weeks, our aircraft have seized control of the skies. Our soldiers and marines and special forces control the bulk of the country. In less than 3 weeks, our troops are showering in Saddam's Presidential Palace in the capital city of Baghdad. In the blitz to Baghdad, our troops have taken more than 4,500 Iraqi prisoners. These prisoners are being seen by officials from the International Committee of the Red Cross to ensure they are treated within the guidelines of the Geneva Convention. Saddam has been holding American prisoners for more than 2 weeks and has yet to grant the Red Cross access to them.

Our forces have been treating the wounds of countless innocent Iraqis caught in the crossfire. Our forces delivered relief to Iraqi citizens through its southern cities, removing deadly mines that prevented ships from docking. Our troops are safeguarding their ports and their oil wells for the time being.

I think it is amazing that our military has had such an impact and has yet been able to focus it away from the civilians. Obviously, there are accidents and there are losses but relatively few. That is most difficult in this kind of situation.

Just days ago there were naysayers who said Operation Iraqi Freedom was failing. Now most of the conversation is about what we are going to do after the combat is over. It is very difficult. Imagine what these naysayers might have said on D-Day, Okinawa, Saipan, Chosin, Yorktown, Gettysburg, or a host of other battles in our history and how their commentaries might have influenced America's support in the war.

I sincerely hope—and I believe—that the American people are not as faint-hearted or impatient as some would argue. We are in the 19th day of a war.