

even a bomb blast at the Baghdad Hotel just a few blocks away from this now very busy commercial strip has dampened the growing activity. A number of our colleagues have traveled and are continuing to travel to Iraq, and they come back with those encouraging reports that we are just beginning to hear about these days.

Recently, ABC News reported that at one computer and data system company, trade is up 70 percent since sanctions were lifted in May. At the Al Farah used car lot, a 9-year-old Jeep sells for \$1,000 less today than when Saddam was in power. Meanwhile, government workers at a Karada Street match factory have seen their salaries soar fivefold. The manager tells the news agency, "Now my salary is much better . . . I can buy anything I want now."

There is much more. Portable generators are selling at discounted prices. Why? Because electricity has become more reliable. Indeed, washing machine and air-conditioner sales are brisk. In a particularly vivid example of how things have changed since the fall of Saddam, a local ice cream shop that used to serve almost exclusively Saddam's circle is now open to any local resident who comes in for that cold treat.

All of these stories are out there and they all point to the dramatic, remarkable changes that are underway that are associated with tasting freedom for the first time in decades.

One of the freedoms Iraqis have been most enthusiastic to exercise is the freedom to express their views. Pollsters for a new Gallup poll reported last week that Iraqis were pleading to share their opinions, and almost every Iraqi asked to participate in the survey volunteered to do so. Gallup's director of international polling told reporters that once they started talking, the Iraqis "went on and on."

It is not hard to imagine the exhilaration they must feel today, how their hearts must swell with the realization that they, for the first time in decades, are truly free—free from tyranny, free from torture, free from persecution, free to speak their minds and create a government of their own devising, for the people and by the people.

For the first time in a generation, the Iraqi people live free of the tyranny of Saddam Hussein. They have begun to develop democratic institutions of government. They are pursuing economic policies on trade and investment that are more liberal than any other country in the region. The Iraqi people have begun replacing that old Saddam currency with the new, unified dinar. They will have in their wallets a powerful symbol of their liberation, money to save or to spend as they choose, without Saddam's face mocking their hopes.

The Gallup poll I mentioned just a few minutes ago found that, even in Baghdad, the Iraqis want us to stay that course. That is because the Iraqis

now have an opportunity, as do we, to change the course of history and bring peace and stability to the heart of the Middle East.

For the sake of Iraq, for the sake of America, we must continue to fight for freedom. Our Declaration of Independence tells us that all men are created equal. Now, in Iraq, we have the opportunity to once again realize that essential truth.

I yield the floor.

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#### RESERVATION OF LEADERSHIP TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

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#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for morning business until the hour of 10 a.m. with the time equally divided between the Senator from Texas, Mrs. HUTCHISON, or her designee, and the Democratic leader or his designee.

Who seeks recognition?

The Senator from Ohio.

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#### ARMY PRIVATE FIRST CLASS BRANDEN F. OBERLEITNER

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, this past May, I came to the Senate Floor to commemorate the 58th Anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. I had been asked by the surviving members of an Army Company—Company K of the 409th Regiment of the 103rd Infantry Division—to fly a flag over our U.S. Capitol building in honor of those in the company who died on the field of battle—those who did not return home—those who Bill Gleason, a Private in K Company, described this way:

Some in our Company were denied the chance to reach old age. They didn't make it to adulthood. They never were old enough to vote in an election. They died then—there in France or Germany. . . . They are frozen in time as they were—forever youthful.

I have again flown flags over our U.S. Capitol and am here today on the Floor of the United States Senate to pay tribute to another soldier—another soldier who did not make it home—another soldier who will remain forever youthful.

Private First Class Branden F. Oberleitner was born on June 18, 1982, in Columbus, OH. He grew up in nearby Worthington, OH, and graduated from Thomas Worthington High School in 2001, just two short years ago. He was a beloved member of his class.

As a kid growing up, many of his friends and family described Branden as "ornery"—as an independent kid who liked to do things his own way. He didn't feel a need to "follow the crowd." He enjoyed looking for crabs with his friends and taking trips to Kentucky to explore in some of the local caves.

Branden valued friendship. Once you were Branden's friend, you were always his friend.

He was loyal.

Branden had an innate ability to fix things. He could intuitively find solutions to problems. Branden was a gifted mechanic and loved to work on cars—especially the 1988 Delta Oldsmobile that seemed to occupy a permanent place in the family driveway. Branden's friend and classmate, Tyler Louk, remembers him elbow-deep in grease working on that car night after night after night.

Branden dreamed of opening a bike shop someday with one of his friends. They were going to fix Harley's.

During high school, Branden started taking firefighting classes at the Delaware Area Career Center. He met a man there named Keith Luce, a retired firefighter and now a firefighter and EMT trainer, who had been an airborne trooper in Vietnam. Keith became an important role model, mentor, and trusted friend. The two developed a tight bond. They had a great deal in common and just seemed to speak the same language. Branden looked up to Keith—he respected him.

With Keith's support and encouragement, Branden thrived in his firefighter training courses. He took to it. He was adept at it. He had found something that really interested him and something that he was good at and enjoyed—something he could make a career out of when he was finished with high school.

Branden's life was taking on whole new dimensions. He was becoming a grounded, disciplined young man, who learned to take time to think things through.

He became focused and developed a sense of responsibility for himself and an appreciation for the needs of others. He wanted to make something of his life—he wanted to help others—he wanted to be of service to others.

The tragic terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, brought further clarity to Branden's life and his plans for the future. Angered by the vicious attacks and compelled to protect others from future terrorist strikes, Branden enlisted in the United States Army. He joined B Company, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Assault Division, based out of Fort Campbell, KY.

The call to arms resonated with Branden. "That's all he wanted to do," said friend Kevin Earhart, who worked with Branden at a local gas station before he enlisted. Military service became his passion. He was a good soldier—regimented and resolute. He quickly earned the respect of his unit. Known as "Obie," Branden served as an infantryman and back-up medic, where he was regarded as being both tactically and technically proficient. All in his unit endorsed his application for Officer Candidate School. His Captain, William Riley, described him as "a shining example of what a soldier