Without objection, 5-minute voting will continue.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 236, noes 181, not voting 15, as follows:

[Roll No. 190]

AYES—236

Adams
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Amash
Austria
Bachmann
Bachus
Barletta
Bartlett
Barton (TX)
Bass (NH)
Benishek
Berg
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Bonner
Bono Mack
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brooks
Broun (GA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Buerkle
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Canseco
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Cassidy
Chabot
Chaffetz
Coble
Coffman (CO)
Cole
Conaway
Cravaack
Crawford
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Denham
Dent
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Dold
Dreier
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Ellmers
Emerson
Farenthold
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Flake
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Grimm
Guinta
Guthrie
Hall
Hanna
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (WA)
Hayworth
Heck
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Herrera Beutler
Huelskamp
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Issa
Jenkins
Johnson (IL)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Kelly
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kline
Lamborn
Lance
Landry
Lankford
Latham
LaTourette
Latta
Lewis (CA)
LoBiondo
Long
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lummis
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
Marino
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McCotter
McHenry
McKeon
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
Meehan
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Mulvaney
Murphy (PA)
Myrick
Neugebauer
Noem
Nugent
Nunes
Nunnelee
Olson
Palazzo
Paul
Paulsen
Pearce
Pence
Petri
Pitts
Platts
Poe (TX)
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Quayle
Reed
Rehberg
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rigell
Rivera
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross (FL)
Royce
Runyan
Ryan (WI)
Scalise
Schilling
Schmidt
Schweikert
Scott (SC)
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shimkus
Shuler
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Southerland
Stearns
Stivers
Stutzman
Sullivan
Terry
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden
Walsh (IL)
Webster
West
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Young (FL)
Young (IN)

NOES—181

Ackerman
Altmire
Andrews
Baca
Baldwin
Barrow
Bass (CA)
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown (FL)
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson (IN)
Castor (FL)
Chandler
Chu
Cicilline
Clarke (MI)
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Connolly (VA)
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Critz
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLauro
Deutch
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly (IN)
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Eshoo
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Fudge
Gonzalez
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Hanabusa
Hastings (FL)
Heinrich
Higgins
Himes
Hinchey
Hirono
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson Lee (TX)
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Kaptur
Keating
Kildee
Kind
Kissell
Kucinich
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee (CA)
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Luján
Lynch
Markey
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
Meeks
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Moore
Moran
Murphy (CT)
Napolitano
Neal
Olver
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor (AZ)
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peters
Peterson
Pingree (ME)
Polis
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Richardson
Richmond
Ross (AR)
Rothman (NJ)
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schrader
Schwartz
Scott (VA)
Scott, David
Serrano
Sewell
Sherman
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Speier
Stark
Sutton
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Tonko
Towns
Tsongas
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Waters
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch
Wilson (FL)
Woolsey
Wu
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—15

Clarke (NY)
Cohen
Engel
Garamendi
Giffords
Gutierrez
Hinojosa
Jordan
Labrador
Maloney
Nadler
Rooney
Schock
Wasserman Schultz
Young (AK)

□ 1057

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AFGHANISTAN WAR POWERS RESOLUTION

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the order of the House of March 16, 2011, I call up the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 28) directing the President, pursuant to section 5(c) of the War Powers Resolution, to remove the United States Armed Forces from Afghanistan, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WOMACK). Pursuant to the order of the House of Wednesday, March 16, 2011, the concurrent resolution is considered read.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 28

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring),

SECTION 1. REMOVAL OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES FROM AFGHANISTAN.

Pursuant to section 5(c) of the War Powers Resolution (50 U.S.C. 1544(c)), Congress directs the President to remove the United States Armed Forces from Afghanistan—

(1) by no later than the end of the period of 30 days beginning on the day on which this concurrent resolution is adopted; or

(2) if the President determines that it is not safe to remove the United States Armed Forces before the end of that period, by no later than December 31, 2011, or such earlier date as the President determines that the Armed Forces can safely be removed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The concurrent resolution shall be debatable for 2 hours, with 1 hour controlled by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) or his designee and 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) be allowed to control half of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) will control half the time allocated to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida.

□ 1100

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this resolution, as it would undermine the efforts of our military and our international partners in Afghanistan and would gravely harm our Nation's security.

Insanity has been described as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Three thousand people died on September 11 because we walked away once from Afghanistan, thinking that it didn't matter who controlled that country. We were wrong then. Let us not make the same mistake twice. Completing our mission in Afghanistan is essential to keeping our homeland safe.

As Under Secretary of Defense Michele Flournoy stated in testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee earlier this week, ''The threat to our national security and the security of our friends and allies that emanates from the borderland of Afghanistan and Pakistan is not hypothetical.

There is simply no other place in the world that contains such a concentration of al Qaeda senior leaders and operational commanders. To allow these hostile organizations to flourish in this region is to put the security of the United States and our friends and allies at grave risk.''

To quit the area before we have routed out the terrorists would not only hand al Qaeda a propaganda victory of immeasurable value, it would cede them a sanctuary from which they could mount fresh strikes at the west with virtual immunity. To withdraw from Afghanistan at this point, before we finish the job, is to pave the way for the next 9/11. Therefore, the question that we must consider is, Can we afford to abandon our mission in Afghanistan? General David Petraeus, commander, International Security Assistance Force, ISAF, commander, U.S. Forces Afghanistan, stated, ''I can understand the frustration. We have been at this for 10 years. We have spent an enormous amount of money. We have sustained very tough losses and difficult, life-changing wounds. But I think it is important to remember why we are there.''

This is about our vital national security interests, Mr. Speaker. It is about doing what is necessary to ensure that al Qaeda and other extremists cannot reestablish safe havens such as the ones they had in Afghanistan when the 9/11 attacks were planned against our Nation and our people. The enemy, indeed, is on the run. It is demoralized and divided. Let us not give up now.

Let us not betray the sacrifices of our men and women serving in harm's way, and they ask for nothing in return, except our full support. Dedicated servants such as my stepson Douglas and daughter-in-law Lindsay, who served in Iraq—and Lindsay also served in Afghanistan. Dedicated servants such as Matt Zweig and Greg McCarthy of our Foreign Affairs Committee majority staff, who just returned from serving a year in Kandahar and Kabul. And we thank them for their service. Let us follow the lead of our wounded warriors who, after long and arduous recoveries, volunteer to return to the battlefield to finish their mission. I urge our colleagues to oppose this dangerous resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KUCINICH. I yield myself 2 minutes.

In the next 2 hours, we are going to demonstrate that the American people oppose this war by a margin of two to one. I will enter into the RECORD this Washington Post poll that was published on March 15 which says that nearly two-thirds of Americans say the war isn't worth fighting.

In the next 2 hours, we are going to demonstrate that we are spending $100 billion per year on this war. There are those who are saying the war could last at least another 10 years. Are we willing to spend another $1 trillion on a war that doesn't have any exit plan, for which there is no timeframe to get out, no endgame, where we haven't defined our mission? The question is not whether we can afford to leave. The question is, can we afford to stay? And I submit we cannot afford to stay.

In the next 2 hours, we are going to demonstrate that the counterintelligence strategy of General Petraeus is an abysmal failure, and it needs to be called as such. So I want to conclude this part of my presentation with an article by Thomas Friedman in The New York Times, which says, ''What are we doing spending $110 billion this year supporting corrupt and unpopular regimes in Afghanistan and Pakistan that are almost identical to the governments we are applauding the Arab people for overthrowing?''

[From The Washington Post, Mar. 15, 2011]

POLL: NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF AMERICANS SAY AFGHAN WAR ISN'T WORTH FIGHTING

(By Scott Wilson and Jon Cohen)

Nearly two-thirds of Americans now say the war in Afghanistan is no longer worth fighting, the highest proportion yet opposed to the conflict, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll.

The finding signals a growing challenge for President Obama as he decides how quickly to pull U.S. forces from the country beginning this summer. After nearly a decade of conflict, political opposition to the battle breaks sharply along partisan lines, with only 19 percent of Democratic respondents and half of Republicans surveyed saying the war continues to be worth fighting.

Nearly three-quarters of Americans say Obama should withdraw a ''substantial number'' of combat troops from Afghanistan this summer, the deadline he set to begin pulling out some forces. Only 39 percent of respondents, however, say they expect him to withdraw large numbers.

The Post-ABC News poll results come as Gen. David H. Petraeus, the U.S. commander in Afghanistan, prepares to testify before Congress on Tuesday about the course of the war. He is expected to face tough questioning about a conflict that is increasingly unpopular among a broad cross section of Americans.

Petraeus will tell Congress that ''things are progressing very well,'' Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell said Monday. But because of battlefield gains made by U.S. and coalition forces since last year, Morrell told MSNBC, ''it's going to be heavy and intensive in terms of fighting'' once the winter cold passes.

The poll began asking only in 2007 whether the Afghan war is worth fighting, but support has almost certainly never been as low as it is in the most recent survey.

The growing opposition presents Obama with a difficult political challenge ahead of his 2012 reelection effort, especially in his pursuit of independent voters.

Since Democrats took a beating in last year's midterm elections, Obama has appealed to independents with a middle-of-the-road approach to George W. Bush-era tax cuts and budget negotiations with Republican leaders on Capitol Hill. He called a news conference last week to express concern about rising gasoline prices, an economically pressing issue for many independent voters.

But his approach to the Afghan war has not won over the independents or liberal Democrats who propelled his campaign two years ago, and the most recent Post-ABC News poll reinforces the importance of Republicans as the chief constituency supporting his strategy. The results suggest that the war will be an awkward issue for the president as he looks for ways to end it. Nearly 1,500 U.S. troops have died since the fighting began in 2001.

During his 2008 campaign, Obama promised to withdraw American forces from the Iraq war, which he opposed, and devote more resources to the flagging effort in Afghanistan, which he has called an essential front in combating Islamist terrorism targeting the United States.

After a months-long strategy review in the fall of 2009, he announced the deployment of an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan—taking the total to more than 100,000—and a July 2011 deadline for the start of their withdrawal.

The number of respondents to the Post-ABC News poll who say the war is not worth fighting has risen from 44 percent in late 2009 to 64 percent in the survey conducted last week.

Two-thirds of independents hold that position, according to the poll, and nearly 80 percent said Obama should withdraw a ''substantial number'' of troops from Afghanistan this summer. Barely more than a quarter of independents say the war is worth its costs, and for the first time a majority feel ''strongly'' that it is not.

Obama, who met with Petraeus on Monday at the White House, has said he will determine the pace of the withdrawal by assessing conditions on the ground.

At the same time, U.S. and NATO forces have come under sharp criticism from the Afghan government. Over the weekend, after a NATO bombing killed nine children, Afghan President Hamid Karzai demanded that international troops ''stop their operations in our land,'' a more pointed call than previous ones he has made following such deadly NATO mistakes.

The telephone poll was conducted March 10 to 13 among a random national sample of 1,005 adults. Results from the full poll have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

The survey also asked respondents to assess Obama's performance in managing the political changes sweeping across the Middle East and North Africa. Overall, 45 percent of respondents approve of his handling of the situation, and 44 percent disapprove.

In Libya, where Moammar Gaddafi is battling a rebel force seeking to end his 41-year rule, Obama is under increasing pressure to implement a no-fly zone over the country to prevent the Libyan leader from taking back lost territory and to protect civilians from government reprisals.

Nearly six in 10 Americans say they would support U.S. participation in a no-fly zone over Libya, the poll found, despite recent warnings from Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates that doing so would be a ''major operation.''

But the survey found that American support dips under 50 percent when it comes to unilateral U.S. action, as Democrats and independents peel away.

When told that such a mission would entail U.S. warplanes bombing Libyan antiaircraft positions and ''continuous patrols,'' about a quarter of those initially advocating U.S. participation turn into opponents.

After a meeting Monday with Danish Prime Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen, Obama said, ''We will be continuing to coordinate closely both through NATO as well as the United Nations and other international fora to look at every single option that's available to us in bringing about a better outcome for the Libyan people.''

In general, Americans do not think that the changes in the Middle East and North Africa will prove beneficial to U.S. economic and security interests.

More than seven in 10 respondents said demonstrators are interested in building new governments, although not necessarily democratic ones. Almost half of those surveyed view the turmoil as undermining the United States' ability to fight terrorist groups in the region.

[From the New York Times, March 6, 2011]

THE $110 BILLION QUESTION

(By Thomas L. Friedman)

When one looks across the Arab world today at the stunning spontaneous democracy uprisings, it is impossible to not ask: What are we doing spending $110 billion this year supporting corrupt and unpopular regimes in Afghanistan and Pakistan that are almost identical to the governments we're applauding the Arab people for overthrowing?

Ever since 9/11, the West has hoped for a war of ideas within the Muslim world that would feature an internal challenge to the violent radical Islamic ideology of Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda. That contest, though, never really materialized because the regimes we counted on to promote it found violent Muslim extremism a convenient foil, so they allowed it to persist. Moreover, these corrupt, crony capitalist Arab regimes were hardly the ideal carriers for an alternative to bin Ladenism. To the contrary, it was their abusive behavior and vicious suffocation of any kind of independent moderate centrist parties that fueled the extremism even more.

Now the people themselves have taken down those regimes in Egypt and Tunisia, and they're rattling the ones in Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Oman and Iran. They are not doing it for us, or to answer bin Laden. They are doing it by themselves for themselves—because they want their freedom and to control their own destinies. But in doing so they have created a hugely powerful, modernizing challenge to bin Ladenism, which is why Al Qaeda today is tongue-tied. It's a beautiful thing to watch.

Al Qaeda's answer to modern-day autocracy was its version of the seventh-century Caliphate. But the people—from Tunisia to Yemen—have come up with their own answer to violent extremism and the abusive regimes we've been propping up. It's called democracy. They have a long way to go to lock it in. It may yet be hijacked by religious forces. But, for now, it is clear that the majority wants to build a future in the 21st century, not the seventh.

In other words, the Arab peoples have done for free, on their own and for their own reasons, everything that we were paying their regimes to do in the ''war on terrorism'' but they never did.

And that brings me back to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Last October, Transparency International rated the regime of President Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan as the second most corrupt in the world after Somalia's. That is the Afghan regime we will spend more than $110 billion in 2011 to support.

And tell me that Pakistan's intelligence service, ISI, which dominates Pakistani politics, isn't the twin of Hosni Mubarak's security service. Pakistan's military leaders play the same game Mubarak played with us for years. First, they whisper in our ears: ''Psst, without us, the radical Islamists will rule. So we may not be perfect, but we're the only thing standing in the way of the devil.'' In reality, though, they are nurturing the devil. The ISI is long alleged to have been fostering anti-Indian radical Muslim groups and masterminding the Afghan Taliban.

Apart from radical Islam, the other pretext the Pakistani military uses for its inordinate grip on power is the external enemy. Just as Arab regimes used the conflict with Israel for years to keep their people distracted and to justify huge military budgets, Pakistan's ISI tells itself, the Pakistani people and us that it can't stop sponsoring proxies in Afghanistan because of the ''threat'' from India.

Here's a secret: India is not going to invade Pakistan. It is an utterly bogus argument. India wants to focus on its own development, not owning Pakistan's problems. India has the second-largest Muslim population on the planet, more even than Pakistan. And while Indian Muslims are not without their economic and political grievances, they are, on the whole, integrated into India's democracy because it is a democracy. There are no Indian Muslims in Guantanamo Bay.

Finally, you did not need to dig very far in Egypt or Jordan to hear that one reason for the rebellion in Egypt and protests in Jordan was the in-your-face corruption and crony capitalism that everyone in the public knew about.

That same kind of pillaging of assets—natural resources, development aid, the meager savings of a million Kabul Bank depositors and crony contracts—has fueled a similar anger against the regime in Afghanistan and undermined our nation-building efforts there.

The truth is we can't do much to consolidate the democracy movements in Egypt and Tunisia. They'll have to make it work themselves. But we could do what we can, which is divert some of the $110 billion we're lavishing on the Afghan regime and the Pakistani Army and use it for debt relief, schools and scholarships to U.S. universities for young Egyptians and Tunisians who had the courage to take down the very kind of regimes we're still holding up in Kabul and Islamabad.

I know we can't just walk out of Afghanistan and Pakistan; there are good people, too, in both places. But our involvement in these two countries—150,000 troops to confront Al Qaeda—is totally out of proportion today with our interests and out of all sync with our values.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH), the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this resolution, and I do so as one who does firmly believe that we need to, as soon as we responsibly can, end our military engagement in Afghanistan. The cost is very real.

I represent Joint Base Lewis-McChord, which includes Fort Lewis Army Base, and we have lost many soldiers in Afghanistan. The families understand the cost. We need to wind down this war as quickly and as responsibly as we can. Unfortunately, this resolution does not give us the opportunity to do that. And we have clear national security interests in Afghanistan.

While I may agree with many of the statements about the troubles and challenges that we face in that region, the one thing that you will hear today that I cannot agree with is the idea that we have no national security interests in Afghanistan and Pakistan, or that we somehow do not have a clear mission. We have a clear mission. We do not want the Taliban and their al Qaeda allies back in charge of Afghanistan or any significant part of Afghanistan from which they could plot attacks against us, as they are still trying to do in the parts of Pakistan that they are in.

We need to get an Afghanistan Government that can stand up, and they are going to need our help to get there. Now there are many who have argued—and I am sure some on both sides of the aisle would be sympathetic with the notion that we need to reduce our commitment there—that a full-scale counterinsurgency effort, or 100,000 U.S. troops and 150,000 NATO and U.S. troops combined, is too much. Let's go with a much lighter footprint. Many have advocated that. Focuses on counterterrorism, focuses on going after the terrorists, and allows the Afghans to take the lead on everything else. And there is a plausible argument for that. This resolution does not allow that.

I want the Members of this Chamber to understand this resolution requires complete withdrawal of all U.S. forces by the end of this year. And I can tell you, as the ranking member on the Armed Services Committee, that is not in the national security interest of this country.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. BERMAN. I yield the gentleman 1 additional minute.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. We may have a legitimate debate about what our presence should be, how we should change it, but the notion that we can simply walk away from this problem, as Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN pointed out, is simply not true. And it is a problem that, believe me, I, as much as anyone in this body, would love to be able to walk away from. It is an enormous challenge. And what Mr. Friedman has to say about the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan is spot on. But the problem is, we can't simply walk away from them and let them fall because of the national security implications that that has for us right here at home, given what the Taliban and al Qaeda would plan. I am all in favor of a more reasonable plan for how we go forward in Afghanistan, but simply heading for the hills and leaving is not a responsible plan. It's not even really a plan for how to deal with the very difficult challenges that we face in that region, and I urge this body to oppose this resolution.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) for yielding me half of his time, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

□ 1110

Mr. Speaker, we are debating how long we are going to be in Afghanistan. Recently, Secretary Gates testified before the Armed Services Committee, which I serve on, and said that he thought by 2014 we could start substantial reduction in our troop strength in

Afghanistan, 2014, that it might be 2015, 2016.

That's why this debate and this resolution is so important, not important for those of us in the House, but important for our military and the American people.

And Mr. KUCINICH did make reference to The Washington Post-ABC poll that was taken a couple of days ago that said 73 percent of the American people said it's time, this year, to bring our troops home.

In addition, I would like to share a quote from the leader of Afghanistan, Mr. Karzai. He's our man in Afghanistan. All right, now, he's our man. This was his quote 3 days ago: ''I request that NATO and America should stop these operations on our soil,'' Karzai said. ''This war is not on our soil. If this war is against terror, then this war is not here. Terror is not here.''

The number of al Qaeda and their presence in Afghanistan is about 20 or 30. Most of them are in Pakistan. I would agree with that. But this debate is critical.

Before I reserve the balance of my time, I want to share very quickly a letter from a retired colonel who's a marine that lives in my district: ''I am writing this letter to express my concern over the current Afghanistan war. I am a retired marine officer with 31-plus years of active duty. I retired in 2004 due to service limitations, or I am sure I would have been on my third or fourth deployment by now to a war that has gone on too long.''

And I'll go to the bottom of this: ''It makes no sense if we're there 4 years or 40. The results will be the same.''

And he closed his letter this way: ''This war is costing the United States billions of dollars a month to wage, and we still continue to get more young Americans killed. The Afghan war has no end state for us.

''I urge you to make contact with all the current and newly elected men and women in Congress and ask them to end this war and bring our young men and women home. If any of my comments will assist in this effort, you are welcome to use them and my name.

''Respectfully, Dennis G. Adams, Lieutenant Colonel retired, United States Marine Corps.''

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KUCINICH. I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in absolute support of the resolution offered by the gentleman from Ohio.

The war in Afghanistan, almost 10 years old, has been an utter failure in every possible way. It hasn't eliminated the terrorist threat. It hasn't destroyed the Taliban. It hasn't advanced national security objectives. It hasn't promoted a vibrant democracy in Afghanistan. It hasn't done any of the things it was supposed to do.

And General Petraeus' testimony this week didn't inspire much confidence either. He continues to offer the same vague reassurances about progress we've supposedly made, while being sure to say that challenges remain so he can continue justifying a substantial troop presence in Afghanistan. But I'm not reassured in the least. And much more importantly, the American people aren't reassured.

After 9½ years, after seeing 1,500 of their fellow citizens killed, after writing a check to the tune of $386 billion, they've had enough. They are angry, they are frustrated, as well they should be.

A new poll shows that nearly two-thirds of Americans, 64 percent, think the war isn't worth fighting. This is one of the least popular things our government is doing, and yet it's just about the only one Republicans don't want to cut.

I think it's about time the people's House listened to the people on the issue of war and peace and life and death. We need to negotiate, and we need to sign the Status of Forces Agreement, SOFA, with Afghanistan.

We need to move quickly toward the massive redeployment in July, as the President promised more than a year ago. In the name of moral decency, fiscal sanity and constitutional integrity, it's time to bring our troops home.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, before I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON), the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, it is important to underscore, as the Under Secretary of Defense Michele Flournoy has, that to withdraw from Afghanistan at this time, before we finish the job, is to pave the way for the next 9/11.

She and other U.S. and allied officials note that we need look no further than the example of Ahmad Siddiqui, a 36-year-old German of Afghan origin who U.S. interrogators talked to, and he revealed Osama bin Laden was planning an attack on Europe. Without our boots on the ground in Afghanistan the plot against Europe might never have been uncovered. Without our boots on the ground, we will not be able to stop the next wave of attacks against our homeland, our citizens, our families, and ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON), the esteemed chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I join with my colleagues from the Foreign Services Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee, and my colleagues from the Armed Services Committee in opposition to this resolution. This resolution would undermine the efforts of our military commanders and troops as they work side by side with their Afghan and coalition partners.

Yesterday, in his testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, General Petraeus, commander of the U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan, described significant progress made by our troops and Afghan forces. But while the United States is on track to accomplish our objectives by 2014, the general also warned that this hard-fought progress is fragile and reversible; and he urged that continued support from this Congress for our mission in Afghanistan is vital to success.

When asked specifically how our troops and enemies would view the resolution before us today, General Petraeus stated: The Taliban and al Qaeda obviously would trumpet this as a victory. Needless to say, it would completely undermine everything our troopers have fought so much and sacrificed so much for.

Mr. Speaker, when the President authorized a surge of 30,000 additional troops, he reminded us of why we are in Afghanistan. It's the epicenter of where al Qaeda planned and launched the 9/11 attacks against innocent Americans. It remains vital to the national security of this country to prohibit the Taliban from once again providing sanctuary to al Qaeda leaders.

Moreover, withdrawing before completing our mission would reinforce extremist propaganda that Americans are weak and unreliable allies and could facilitate extremist recruiting and future attacks.

Like most Republicans, I supported the President's decision to surge in Afghanistan. I believe that with additional forces, combined with giving General Petraeus the time, space and resources he needs, we can win this conflict.

During a visit last week with our troops in Afghanistan, Secretary Gates observed the closer you get to this fight, the better it looks. Having just returned myself from Afghanistan a few weeks ago, I couldn't agree more.

Our delegation to Afghanistan met with senior military commanders and diplomats, talked to airmen at Bagram, marines in Helmand and soldiers in Kandahar. It was clear to our delegation that our forces have made significant gains and have reversed the Taliban's momentum.

□ 1120

Our forces and their Afghan partners have cleared enemy strongholds, swept up significant weapons caches, and given more Afghans the confidence to defy the Taliban. We have made considerable progress in growing and professionalizing Afghanistan's army and police so these forces are more capable and reliable partners to our own troops.

As significant as our troops' achievements in the fields are, they can easily be undone by poor decisions made here in Washington. Today's debate is not being conducted in a vacuum. Our troops are listening. Our allies are listening.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. MCKEON. The Taliban and al Qaeda are also listening. And, finally, the Afghan people are listening.

Mr. Speaker, I want to send a clear message to the Afghan people and government, our coalition partners, our military men and women that this Congress will stand firm in our commitment to free us from the problems that the Taliban created for us on 9/11. We will not have this sanctuary ever happen again.

I urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on this resolution.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in opposition to the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, this is the third debate we have had pursuant to a war powers resolution in the last year.

I completely agree with the gentleman from Ohio that as we are moving into the 10th year of this conflict, it is critical—not just nice, it is really critical for the House to have an open and honest debate on the merits of our ongoing military operations in Afghanistan, and that debate should be outside of the context of a defense spending bill.

But what I also do is take strong issue with the invocation of section 5(c) of the War Powers Act as the basis for this debate. If we are here to respect the law and the procedures, you have to remember that it is that section which authorizes a privileged resolution, like the one we have before us today, to require the withdrawal of U.S. Forces when they are engaged in hostilities and Congress has not authorized the use of military force.

There may be aspects of our operations around the world that people can claim under section 5(c) have not been authorized. No one can make a contention that what we are now doing in Afghanistan was not authorized by the Congress. There can be no doubt this military action in Afghanistan was authorized. It was authorized in 2001, soon after 9/11.

But let's set aside the procedure and the specific dictates of the statute. I do think and share my concerns, well articulated by the ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, that it is not responsible to demand a complete withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan by the end of the year without regard to the consequence of our withdrawal, without regard to the situation on the ground, including efforts to promote economic development and expand the rule of law, and without any measurement of whether the current strategy is indeed working.

I am very sensitive to the arguments posed by the gentleman from Ohio. The cost of human life due to the war and the heavy costs incurred by our country at a time of great economic hardship should give any Member of Congress pause.

I am also keenly aware of the concerns regarding our overall U.S. strategy in Afghanistan. It remains to be seen whether a counterinsurgency strategy will succeed there and, equally important, whether the Afghans are taking sufficient responsibility for this war. I am troubled that the war very much remains an American-led effort and that the U.S. presence has created a culture of dependency in Afghanistan.

Notwithstanding all that, I won't support a call for a full withdrawal until we give the President's strategy additional time, at least through the spring, to show results or, without a responsible withdrawal strategy, to ensure gains made thus far will not be lost.

A number of positive developments make me unwilling to throw in the towel just yet. For example, as noted by General Petraeus in testimony yesterday, coalition forces have been making some progress against Taliban forces in southern Afghanistan. In addition, the training of Afghan security forces has exceeded targets, and we are inching slowly toward the point at which they may be able to secure their own borders.

A final plea to my colleagues, and that is to some of my colleagues who are joining me in opposing this resolution. I am sure we are not going to succeed in Afghanistan unless our civilian efforts are fully resourced. When I traveled to Afghanistan last April, I was encouraged to see our military forces, diplomats, and development experts working closely together in the field.

General Petraeus couldn't have been more clear in his testimony: We are setting ourselves up for failure if we fully fund the clear part of the President's counterinsurgency strategy, the part carried out by the military, but shortchange the hold-and-build portions of the strategy, like economic development and building good governance. These are the keys to lasting success in Afghanistan. These are the keys to a successful counterinsurgency strategy. And when we meet those tests and do those works, we may be able to create the environment that will allow our troops to return home.

For all these reasons, I oppose the resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, we will be debating this probably in 2015 or 2016. If I am not here, somebody else will be, because that is how long we are going to be there.

This general that served in the Marine Corps that has advised me for 11 months, back in November I asked: ''What do you think about 4 more years?''

I am just going to read part of his email:

''I do not believe that 40 more years would guarantee victory, whatever that is; so 4 will do nothing. The war is costing money and lives, all in short supply.''

I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN).

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution.

First, I want to thank the gentleman from North Carolina for yielding me this time. And I want to pay tribute to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES), who is one of the kindest, most sincere, and most courageous Members that we have in this body.

I voted, Mr. Speaker, for this war, but I sure didn't vote for a 10-year war or a forever or a permanent or an endless war.

There is nothing fiscally conservative about this war, and I think conservatives should be the people most horrified by this war.

Alfred Regnery, the publisher of the Conservative American Spectator magazine, wrote last October: ''Afghanistan has little strategic value, and the war is one of choice rather than necessity.'' And he added that it has been a ''wasteful and frustrating decade.''

The worst thing about Iraq and Afghanistan is all the young people who have been killed. But it is also very sad, Mr. Speaker, that we have spent hundreds of billions of dollars—in fact, some estimates are $2 trillion or $3 trillion now in indirect costs—to carry on these two very unnecessary wars.

Our Constitution does not give us the authority to run another country, and that is basically what we have been doing. We have been doing more nation building and more civilian functions than anything else, and we have been turning the Department of Defense, at least in Iraq and Afghanistan, into the Department of Foreign Aid.

I had a conservative Republican elected official from my district in my office this past Monday. His son is in Afghanistan in the Army, and he said he asked his son recently what we were accomplishing there, and he said his son said, ''Dad, we're accomplishing nothing.''

We seem to be making the same mistakes in our policies toward Afghanistan that we made in Iraq. Even General Petraeus has said some time ago that we should never forget that Afghanistan has been known as the ''graveyard of empires.''

George C. Wilson, a military columnist for the Congress Daily, wrote a few months ago: ''The American military's mission to pacify the 40,000 tiny villages in Afghanistan will look like mission impossible, especially if our bombings keep killing Afghan civilians and infuriating the ones who survive.''

The Center for Defense Information said late last year we have now spent $439.8 billion on war and war-related costs in Afghanistan, and $1.63 trillion so far on the war and war-related costs in Iraq. As I said a moment ago, these figures should astound fiscal conservatives.

Georgie Anne Geyer, a syndicated columnist, wrote a few years ago: ''Critics of the war have said since the beginning of the conflict that Americans, still strangely complacent about overseas wars being waged by minorities in their name, will inevitably come to a point where they will see they have to have a government that provides services at home or one that seeks empire across the globe.''

I just finished, Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago doing field hearings around the country in relation to the transportation and highway bill. These were done in Oklahoma, Arkansas, West Virginia, and west Tennessee—very conservative districts. And in each of those places, I said that it's time that we stop spending hundreds of billions on these unnecessary foreign wars and stop rebuilding in Iraq and Afghanistan and start rebuilding the United States of America.

□ 1130

In each of those conservative districts, the people erupted into applause. Only 31 percent of the American people, according to the latest ABC/Newsweek poll that just came out, think this war is still worth it.

William F. Buckley, the conservative icon, wrote a few years ago that he supported the war in Iraq and then he became disillusioned by it, and he wrote these words:

''A respect for the power of the United States is engendered by our success in engagements in which we take part.''

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. JONES. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. William Buckley said:

''A point is reached when tenacity conveys steadfastness of purpose but misapplication of pride.''

President Karzai last year told ABC News he wanted us to stay there another 15 or 20 more years. That's because he wants our money. This war is more about money and power. Every gigantic bureaucracy always wants more money, but this war has gone too far and too long, and I support this resolution.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on House Concurrent Resolution 28.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for your steadfast commitment to the men and women who gallantly serve our country on the battlefield.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the resolution. First, let me get one argument out of the way. I've heard before some of my colleagues who support an American retreat from Afghanistan describe this effort as a fiscal matter. I would respond to that argument by simply stating that it's not a question of whether we can afford to fund a military presence in Afghanistan, it's a matter of whether we can afford not to, particularly at this point.

I think my colleagues know that I'm very uncomfortable spending taxpayer dollars without a solid justification, and I would match my fiscal conservative credentials with anybody in this body. But when it comes to national security and when it comes to the care and protection of our troops in harm's way, we must not be, to use a phrase that you often hear on this floor, penny wise and pound foolish.

Further, a premature withdrawal of American troops from the Afghan theater would send a terrible message to both our friends and also to our adversaries. To our allies in the war on terrorism whom we would leave essentially twisting in the wind, to those 47 other nations that have joined the coalition in Afghanistan, we would essentially be saying, ''Good luck. You're on your own.'' Not exactly what they had in mind when they joined us in this fight.

And, of course, to al Qaeda and to the Taliban, whom we would embolden by adopting this ill-advised resolution, we would be providing, once again, the sanctuary which they enjoyed in Afghanistan before our Armed Forces reversed their momentum.

I don't often find myself in agreement with President Obama's policies, but I did agree with him when he said a little more than a year ago, ''I am convinced that our security is at risk in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is the epicenter of violent extremism practiced by al Qaeda. It is from here that we were attacked on 9/11, and it is here that new attacks are being plotted as I speak.'' That was President Obama.

I also agree with General Petraeus who said last week that ''our core objective in Afghanistan, needless to say, is to ensure that the country does not become a sanctuary once again for al Qaeda, the way it was prior to 9/11.''

I know memories fade with time, but it's been not quite 10 years since 3,000 lives were lost on American soil—in New York, in Pennsylvania, and just minutes from here down the street at the Pentagon. Let's not forget what al Qaeda did then and let's keep working to prevent it from happening again. Let's not quit until the job is done.

Vote ''no'' on this resolution.

Mr. KUCINICH. I would like to insert into the RECORD a report from the United Nations that says that 2010 was the worst year for civilian casualties in Afghanistan with nearly 3,000 civilians killed.

AFGHANISTAN—ANNUAL REPORT ON PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT 2010

Kabul, Afghanistan, March 2011

Executive Summary

The human cost of the armed conflict in Afghanistan grew in 2010. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and UNAMA Human Rights recorded 2,777 civilian deaths in 2010, an increase of 15 per cent compared to 2009. Over the past four years, 8,832 civilians have been killed in the conflict, with civilian deaths increasing each year. The worsening human impact of the conflict reinforces the urgent need for parties to the conflict to do more to protect Afghan civilians, who, in 2010, were killed and injured in their homes and communities in even greater numbers. UNAMA Human Rights and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission urge the Anti-Government Elements and Pro-Government Forces to strengthen civilian protection and fully comply legal obligations to minimize civilian casualties.

CIVILIAN DEATHS

Of the total number of 2,777 civilians killed in 2010, 2,080 deaths (75 per cent of total civilian deaths) were attributed to Anti-Government Elements, up 28 per cent from 2009. Suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) caused the most civilian deaths, totaling 1,141 deaths (55 per cent of civilian deaths attributed to Anti-Government Elements). The most alarming trend in 2010 was the huge number of civilians assassinated by Anti-Government Elements. Four hundred and sixty two civilians were assassinated representing an increase of more than 105 per cent compared to 2009. Half of all civilian assassinations occurred in southern Afghanistan. Helmand province saw a 588 per cent increase in the number of civilians assassinated by Anti-Government Elements and Kandahar province experienced a 248 per cent increase compared to 2009.

Afghan national security and international military forces (Pro-Government Forces) were linked to 440 deaths or 16 per cent of total civilian deaths, a reduction of 26 per cent from 2009. Aerial attacks claimed the largest percentage of civilian deaths caused by Pro-Government Forces in 2010, causing 171 deaths (39 per cent of the total number of civilian deaths attributed to Pro-Government Forces). Notably, there was a 52 per cent decline in civilian deaths from air attacks compared to 2009. Nine per cent of civilian deaths in 2010 could not be attributed to any party to the conflict.

I would like to put into the RECORD a report from the Afghanistan Rights Monitor relating to the number of civilians killed and wounded and displaced.

ARM ANNUAL REPORT

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES OF WAR

JANUARY—DECEMBER 2010

Kabul, Afghanistan, February 2011

Executive Summary

Over nine years after the internationally-celebrated demise of the repressive Taliban regime in Afghanistan, civilian Afghans increasingly suffer from the armed violence and rights violations committed by various internal and external armed actors. More ordinary Afghans were killed and injured in 2010 than a year before. And while US officials dubbed Afghanistan as their longest foreign war, Afghans suffered it for 32 years relentlessly.

Almost everything related to the war surged in 2010: the combined numbers of Afghan and foreign forces surpassed 350,000; security incidents mounted to over 100 per week; more fighters from all warring side were killed; and the number of civilian people killed, wounded and displaced hit record levels.

Collecting information about every security incident and verifying the often conflicting reports about their impacts on civilian people were extremely difficult and risky. The war was as heatedly fought

through propaganda and misinformation as it was in the battlefields thus making independent and impartial war reporting tricky and complex.

Despite all the challenges, we spared no efforts in gathering genuine information, facts and figures about the impacts of war on civilian communities. Our resources were limited and we lacked the luxury of strategic/political support from one or another side of the conflict because we stood by our professional integrity. We, however, managed to use our indigenous knowledge and delved into a wealth of local information available in the conflict-affected villages in order to seek more reliable facts about the war.

From 1 January to 31 December 2010, at least 2,421 civilian Afghans were killed and over 3,270 were injured in conflict-related security incidents across Afghanistan. This means everyday 6–7 noncombatants were killed and 8–9 were wounded in the war.

ARM does not claim that these numbers—although collected and verified to the best of our efforts—are comprehensive and perfect. Actual numbers of the civilian victims of war in 2010 could be higher than what we gathered and present in this report.

Unsurprisingly, about 63 percent of the reported civilian deaths and 70 percent of the injuries were attributed to the Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs) (Taliban, Hezb-e-Islami and the Haqqani Group); 21 percent of deaths (512 individuals) and 22 percent of injuries (655) were attributed to US/NATO forces; and 12 percent of deaths (278 individuals) and 7 percent (239) injuries were caused by pro-government Afghan troops and their allied local militia forces.

In addition to civilian casualties, hundreds of thousands of people were affected in various ways by the intensified armed violence in Afghanistan in 2010. Tens of thousands of people were forced out of their homes or deprived of healthcare and education services and livelihood opportunities due to the continuation of war in their home areas.

In November 2010, ARM was the first organization to voice concerns about the destruction of hundreds of houses, pomegranate trees and orchards in several districts in Kandahar Province by US-led forces as part of their counterinsurgency operations. In January 2011, an Afghan Government delegation reported the damage costs at over US$100 million. In compensation, US/NATO forces have doled out less than $2 million.

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) are widely considered as the most lethal tools which killed over 690 civilians in 2010. However, as you will read in this report, there is virtually no information about the use of cluster munitions by US/NATO forces. Despite Afghanistan's accession to the international Anti-Cluster Bomb Treaty in 2008, the US military has allegedly maintained stockpiles of cluster munitions in Afghanistan.

A second key issue highlighted in this report is the emergence of the irregular armed groups in parts of Afghanistan which are backed by the Afghan Government and its foreign allies. These groups have been deplored as criminal and predatory by many Afghans and have already been accused of severe human rights violations such as child recruitment and sexual abuse.

I would like to put into the RECORD a report from the Congressional Research Service that the war in Afghanistan has cost over $454 billion to date.

INTRODUCTION: WAR FUNDING TO DATE

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States has initiated three military operations: Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) covering primarily Afghanistan and other small Global War on Terror (GWOT) operations ranging from the Philippines to Djibouti that began immediately after the 9/11 attacks and continues; Operation Noble Eagle (ONE) providing enhanced security for U.S. military bases and other homeland security that was launched in response to the attacks and continues at a modest level; and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) that began in the fall of 2002 with the buildup of troops for the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, continued with counter-insurgency and stability operations, and is slated to be renamed Operation New Dawn as U.S. troops focus on an advisory and assistance role.

In the ninth year of operations since the 9/11 attacks while troops are being withdrawn in Iraq and increased in Afghanistan, the cost of war continues to be a major issue including the total amount appropriated, the amount for each operation, average monthly spending rates, and the scope and duration of future costs. Information on costs is useful to Congress to assess the FY2010 Supplemental for war costs for the Department of Defense (DOD) and State/USAID, FY2011 war requests, conduct oversight of past war costs, and consider the longer-term costs implications of the buildup of troops in Afghanistan and potential problems in the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. This report analyzes war funding for the Defense Department and tracks funding for USAID and VA Medical funding.

TOTAL WAR FUNDING BY OPERATION

Based on DOD estimates and budget submissions, the cumulative total for funds appropriated from the 9/11 attacks through the FY2010 Supplemental Appropriations Acts for DOD, State/USAID and VA for medical costs for the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and enhanced security is $1,121 billion including: $751 billion for Iraq; $336 billion for Afghanistan; $29 billion for enhanced security; and $6 billion unallocated.

Of this total, 67% is for Iraq, 30% for Afghanistan, 3% for enhanced security and 1/2% unallocated. Almost all of the funding for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) is for Afghanistan.

This total includes funding provided in H.R. 4899/P.L. 111–212, the FY2010 Supplemental Appropriations Act enacted July 29, 2010.

Some 94% of this funding goes to the Department of Defense (DOD) to cover primarily incremental war-related costs, that is, costs that are in addition to DOD's normal peacetime activities. These costs include: military personnel funds to provide special pay for deployed personnel such as hostile fire or separation pay and to cover the additional cost of activating reservists, as well pay for expanding the Army and Marine Corps to reduce stress on troops; Operation and Maintenance (O&M) funds to transport troops and their equipment to Iraq and Afghanistan, conduct military operations, provide in-country support at bases, and repairing war-worn equipment; Procurement funding to cover buying new weapons systems to replace war losses, and upgrade equipment, pay modernization costs associated with expanding and changing the structure of the size of the Army and Marine Corps; Research, Development, Test & Evaluation costs to develop more effective ways to combat war threats such as roadside bombs; Working Capital Funds to cover expanding the size of inventories of spare parts and fuel to provide wartime support; and Military construction primarily to construct facilities in bases in Iraq or Afghanistan or neighboring countries.

In addition, the Administration initiated several programs specifically targeted at problems that developed in the Afghan and Iraq wars: Coalition support to cover the logistical costs of allies, primarily Pakistan, conducting counter-terror operations in support of U.S. efforts; Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) providing funds to individual commanders for small reconstruction projects and to pay local militias in Iraq and Afghanistan to counter insurgent or Taliban groups; Afghan Security Forces Fund and the Iraq Security Forces Fund to pay the cost of training, equipping and expanding the size of the Afghan and Iraqi armies and police forces; and Joint Improvised Explosive Device (IEDs) Defeat Fund to develop, buy, and deploy new devices to improve force protection for soldiers against roadside bombs or IEDs.

I would like to put into the RECORD an article by Nobel prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes in the Washington Post that says there is no question the Iraq war added substantially to the Federal debt.

[From the Times, Feb. 23, 2008]

THE THREE TRILLION DOLLAR WAR—THE COST OF THE IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN CONFLICTS HAVE GROWN TO STAGGERING PROPORTIONS

(By Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes)

The Bush Administration was wrong about the benefits of the war and it was wrong about the costs of the war. The president and his advisers expected a quick, inexpensive conflict. Instead, we have a war that is costing more than anyone could have imagined.

The cost of direct US military operations—not even including long-term costs such as taking care of wounded veterans—already exceeds the cost of the 12-year war in Vietnam and is more than double the cost of the Korean War.

And, even in the best case scenario, these costs are projected to be almost ten times the cost of the first Gulf War, almost a third more than the cost of the Vietnam War, and twice that of the First World War. The only war in our history which cost more was the Second World War, when 16.3 million U.S. troops fought in a campaign lasting four years, at a total cost (in 2007 dollars, after adjusting for inflation) of about $5 trillion (that's $5 million million, or £2.5 million million). With virtually the entire armed forces committed to fighting the Germans and Japanese, the cost per troop (in today's dollars) was less than $100,000 in 2007 dollars. By contrast, the Iraq war is costing upward of $400,000 per troop.

Most Americans have yet to feel these costs. The price in blood has been paid by our voluntary military and by hired contractors. The price in treasure has, in a sense, been financed entirely by borrowing. Taxes have not been raised to pay for it—in fact, taxes on the rich have actually fallen. Deficit spending gives the illusion that the laws of economics can be repealed, that we can have both guns and butter. But of course the laws are not repealed. The costs of the war are real even if they have been deferred, possibly to another generation.

Background

American voters must choose: more benefits or more defence; $3 trillion budget leaves little for Bush to bank on; MoD forced to cut budget by £1.5bn; they're running our tanks on empty.

On the eve of war, there were discussions of the likely costs. Larry Lindsey, President Bush's economic adviser and head of the National Economic Council, suggested that they might reach $200 billion. But this estimate was dismissed as ''baloney'' by the Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld. His deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, suggested that post-war reconstruction could pay for itself

through increased oil revenues. Mitch Daniels, the Office of Management and Budget director, and Secretary Rumsfeld estimated the costs in the range of $50 to $60 billion, a portion of which they believed would be financed by other countries. (Adjusting for inflation, in 2007 dollars, they were projecting costs of between $57 and $69 billion.) The tone of the entire administration was cavalier, as if the sums involved were minimal.

Even Lindsey, after noting that the war could cost $200 billion, went on to say: ''The successful prosecution of the war would be good for the economy.'' In retrospect, Lindsey grossly underestimated both the costs of the war itself and the costs to the economy. Assuming that Congress approves the rest of the $200 billion war supplemental requested for fiscal year 2008, as this book goes to press Congress will have appropriated a total of over $845 billion for military operations, reconstruction, embassy costs, enhanced security at US bases, and foreign aid programmes in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As the fifth year of the war draws to a close, operating costs (spending on the war itself, what you might call ''running expenses'') for 2008 are projected to exceed $12.5 billion a month for Iraq alone, up from $4.4 billion in 2003, and with Afghanistan the total is $16 billion a month. Sixteen billion dollars is equal to the annual budget of the United Nations, or of all but 13 of the US states. Even so, it does not include the $500 billion we already spend per year on the regular expenses of the Defence Department. Nor does it include other hidden expenditures, such as intelligence gathering, or funds mixed in with the budgets of other departments.

Because there are so many costs that the Administration does not count, the total cost of the war is higher than the official number. For example, government officials frequently talk about the lives of our soldiers as priceless. But from a cost perspective, these ''priceless'' lives show up on the Pentagon ledger simply as $500,000—the amount paid out to survivors in death benefits and life insurance. After the war began, these were increased from $12,240 to $100,000 (death benefit) and from $250,000 to $400,000 (life insurance). Even these increased amounts are a fraction of what the survivors might have received had these individuals lost their lives in a senseless automobile accident. In areas such as health and safety regulation, the US Government values a life of a young man at the peak of his future earnings capacity in excess of $7 million—far greater than the amount that the military pays in death benefits. Using this figure, the cost of the nearly 4,000 American troops killed in Iraq adds up to some $28 billion.

The costs to society are obviously far larger than the numbers that show up on the government's budget. Another example of hidden costs is the understating of U.S. military casualties. The Defense Department's casualty statistics focus on casualties that result from hostile (combat) action—as determined by the military. Yet if a soldier is injured or dies in a night-time vehicle accident, this is officially dubbed ''noncombat related''—even though it may be too unsafe for soldiers to travel during daytime.

In fact, the Pentagon keeps two sets of books. The first is the official casualty list posted on the DOD Web site. The second, hard-to-find, set of data is available only on a different website and can be obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. This data shows that the total number of soldiers who have been wounded, injured, or suffered from disease is double the number wounded in combat. Some will argue that a percentage of these noncombat injuries might have happened even if the soldiers were not in Iraq. Our new research shows that the majority of these injuries and illnesses can be tied directly to service in the war.

From the unhealthy brew of emergency funding, multiple sets of books, and chronic underestimates of the resources required to prosecute the war, we have attempted to identify how much we have been spending—and how much we will, in the end, likely have to spend. The figure we arrive at is more than $3 trillion. Our calculations are based on conservative assumptions. They are conceptually simple, even if occasionally technically complicated. A $3 trillion figure for the total cost strikes us as judicious, and probably errs on the low side. Needless to say, this number represents the cost only to the United States. It does not reflect the enormous cost to the rest of the world, or to Iraq.

From the beginning, the United Kingdom has played a pivotal role—strategic, military, and political—in the Iraq conflict. Militarily, the UK contributed 46,000 troops, 10 per cent of the total. Unsurprisingly, then, the British experience in Iraq has paralleled that of America: rising casualties, increasing operating costs, poor transparency over where the money is going, overstretched military resources, and scandals over the squalid conditions and inadequate medical care for some severely wounded veterans.

Before the war, Gordon Brown set aside £ 1 billion for war spending. As of late 2007, the UK had spent an estimated £ 7 billion in direct operating expenditures in Iraq and Afghanistan (76 per cent of it in Iraq). This includes money from a supplemental ''special reserve'', plus additional spending from the Ministry of Defense.

The special reserve comes on top of the UK's regular defense budget. The British system is particularly opaque: funds from the special reserve are ''drawn down'' by the Ministry of Defense when required, without specific approval by Parliament. As a result, British citizens have little clarity about how much is actually being spent.

In addition, the social costs in the UK are similar to those in the U.S.—families who leave jobs to care for wounded soldiers, and diminished quality of life for those thousands left with disabilities.

By the same token, there are macroeconomic costs to the UK as there have been to America, though the long-term costs may be less, for two reasons. First, Britain did not have the same policy of fiscal profligacy; and second, until 2005, the United Kingdom was a net oil exporter.

We have assumed that British forces in Iraq are reduced to 2,500 this year and remain at that level until 2010. We expect that British forces in Afghanistan will increase slightly, from 7,000 to 8,000 in 2008, and remain stable for three years. The House of Commons Defense Committee has recently found that despite the cut in troop levels, Iraq war costs will increase by 2 per cent this year and personnel costs will decrease by only 5 per cent. Meanwhile, the cost of military operations in Afghanistan is due to rise by 39 per cent. The estimates in our model may be significantly too low if these patterns continue.

Based on assumptions set out in our book, the budgetary cost to the UK of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through 2010 will total more than £ 18 billion. If we include the social costs, the total impact on the UK will exceed £ 20 billion.

I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. BARNEY FRANK.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, first, any suggestion that this is any way disrespectful of the sacrifice of our troops is nonsense. Saying that we do not want brave Americans to continue in a very difficult situation in which they are at a great disadvantage and that in fact we would like to bring them home is no criticism of them at all, and nothing undermines their ability to be there. There is a policy decision as to whether they should be there.

Now my friend from Washington and my friend from California have said, well, this isn't the right forum parliamentarily, and my friend from Washington said, yes, we should have a change in strategy but not this way. But this is all we've got.

Right now, the Members have a choice, and that's the way this place is now being run: Either you vote for this resolution or you vote it down and you give an implicit and, in some cases, explicit approval to the administration to stay there indefinitely. General Petraeus said the other day he sees us jointly there with the Afghans well after 2014.

Now, yes, there is some gain we could get in deterring terrorism there, although the notion that if we stop terrorism in Afghanistan, that's going to be the end of it when there are unfortunately other places in the world—Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, elsewhere. We can't plug every hole in the world. And in fact this is an effort that, having been tried for 10 years, has not, unfortunately, looked to me like it's going to succeed.

We're told, well, but this was important because we deterred an attack on Europe. But where are the Europeans? The thing that most astounded me today was when my friend from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) said, well, what about our 47 coalition partners? What about them? They're sitting this one out. They're pulling out. This is a virtually unilateral American action with a couple of flags that we fly for a few other countries. Some of them did have people there and they've suffered casualties, but they're all withdrawing, leaving us alone.

And then let's talk about the cost of this war. The gentleman from Ohio said it's not a fiscal issue. Of course it is. This war costs us well over $100 billion a year. You will see Americans die from a lack of police and fire and public safety here if you continue to fund this futile war.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am grateful that we are having this debate from both sides, those that want to stay there for another 4 or 5 years versus those of us who would like to bring our troops home. I want to put a face on this debate if I may, Mr. Speaker.

This young man's name is Tyler Jordan from Cincinnati, Ohio. He is attending his father's funeral. He was a gunnery sergeant, Phillip Jordan, who was killed for this country. The 6-year-

old little boy, you can't see his eyes, but they hurt. They're pained.

How many more Tyler Jordans are going to be waiting for their daddy or mom to come home to be buried if we stay there 4, 5, 6, or 7 more years? And that is what has been indicated by the leadership of the military and this administration.

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How many more moms and dads and wives and husbands are going to be at Dover Air Force Base to receive the remains of their loved ones? That is why this debate is so important, and why we need to have a date and a time to start bringing them home.

My last poster: this absolutely handsome couple. The marine went out with PTSD. His beautiful wife, Katie, and his little boy. Last year at Camp Lejeune, McHugh Boulevard, he pulls his car over in the middle of the day, and he shoots himself in the head and kills himself.

How many more Tom Bagosys will commit suicide? How many Tyler Jordans will not have their daddies coming home? How many moms and dads, wives and husbands will be at Dover to see those in a flag-draped coffin?

I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ).

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I am going to be voting in favor of this resolution.

The United States military is the greatest fighting force on the face of the planet. I could not be more proud of our troops who have served our country with such valor and such vigor.

This is the longest war in the history of the United States of America. And let there be no mistake, the global war on terror is real. It is very real.

I reject the notion that polls should matter in any way, shape, or form in this debate. That is not how the United States operates. This is not how we decide whether or not we go to war or we bring our troops home.

I reject the notion that bringing our troops home at some point, which I consider to be victory, is somehow a pathway or paving a pathway to another 9/11. I think that is offensive, and I think it is inaccurate.

Now, in many ways we have had success over the course of the years. Let's understand that according to the National Intelligence Estimate, which has been printed in many newspapers, that the Taliban poses no clear and present danger to the current Afghan Government, nor do they pose a danger to the United States of America. Further, we have had our CIA Director state that there are less than 50 al-Qaeda in the entire boundaries of Afghanistan.

I believe it should be the policy of the United States of America that if we send our troops to war, we go with everything we have. We do not hold back. A politically correct war is a lost war, and at the present time we are playing politics. We aren't going with everything we have. If we are serious about doing it, Mr. President, you go with everything. And until this President attends more funerals than he does rounds of golf, this person will be highly offended.

We have to define the mission. The President of the United States has failed to define success in Afghanistan. We are participating in the business of nation building, and I reject that. We are propping up a government that is fundamentally corrupt, and we all know it. It will not get us to where we want to go.

We must redefine the rules of engagement. Even when I was in Afghanistan visiting with General Petraeus, he admitted that we are using smaller caliber rounds. Again, we are trying to be more politically correct instead of actually protecting American lives.

Let me also say again that terrorism is a global threat. We must use our forces around the world when there is a direct threat on the United States of America. That is not confined to just the boundaries of Afghanistan. It is happening globally, and it is real. We have to deal with the threats in Iran and not take our eye off the ball.

Finally, I would say that our national debt is a clear and present danger to the United States of America, and we must pay attention to that.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair notes a disturbance in the gallery in contravention of the law and rules of the House. The Sergeant-at-Arms will remove those persons responsible for the disturbance and restore order to the gallery.

The gentleman may continue.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, before I continue, may I inquire as to how much time I have left?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 15 seconds remaining.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. May I ask the gentleman to yield me an additional 15 seconds?

Mr. JONES. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Aaron Nemelka, Carlos Aragon, Nigel Olsen, Matthew Wagstaff: Since I have been in office, these are the gentleman who have lost their lives in Afghanistan. I honor them. I thank them. And as I have talked to each of their parents, they want those rules of engagement changed, and they want to end this war in Afghanistan, with victory. With victory.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY), the chairman of the Armed Services Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities.

Mr. THORNBERRY. I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, this week General Petraeus testified before Congress, and the essence of his testimony was that we are just now getting the necessary assets in place to make a difference in Afghanistan; that our troops and coalition partners are making a significant difference; that the progress is fragile and reversible; but that it is essential that we keep it up because vital national interests are at stake.

I fear that as time has passed over the last 10 years and so many other events come and go in our Nation's life, that it is all too easy to forget that this country was attacked on 9/11 and that 3,000 Americans lost their lives. And we could come to the floor and hold up their pictures and the pictures of their children, of those who were killed on that day by terrorists, the attacks that were launched from Afghanistan, that were planned in Afghanistan and directed from Afghanistan.

This Congress at the time voted virtually unanimously that we would take military action to go make sure that Afghanistan would no longer be used as a launching pad for attacks against us and that from Afghanistan, people would no longer come here to kill Americans. That is the reason we are still there today, and that is the purpose of our military actions there today.

It is true that we may have a hard time plugging all the holes that could develop somewhere in the world where terrorist groups could squirt out to, but it is also true, in my view, that if we don't plug this hole, if we don't fulfill the mission that we have set out to fulfill in Afghanistan, we are going to have more holes all over the world developing, because people will know that we are not serious about doing what we say, and our security will be severely affected if that happens.

There have clearly been ups and downs in our military efforts there, just as there were in Iraq. But I believe that from General Petraeus on down, we have our best. They deserve our support to fulfill the mission the country has given them.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD a report from the Afghanistan Study Group that says that the current U.S. military effort is helping to fuel the very insurgency we are attempting to defeat.

SUMMARY

At nine years and counting, the U.S. war in Afghanistan is the longest in our history, surpassing even the Vietnam War, and it will shortly surpass the Soviet Union's own extended military campaign there. With the surge, it will cost the U.S. taxpayers nearly $100 billion per year, a sum roughly seven times larger than Afghanistan's annual gross national product (GNP) of $14 billion and greater than the total annual cost of the new U.S. health insurance program. Thousands of American and allied personnel have been killed or gravely wounded.

The U.S. interests at stake in Afghanistan do not warrant this level of sacrifice. President Obama justified expanding our commitment by saying the goal was eradicating Al Qaeda. Yet Al Qaeda is no longer a significant presence in Afghanistan, and there are only some 400 hard-core Al Qaeda members remaining in the entire Af/Pak theater, most of them hiding in Pakistan's northwest provinces.

America's armed forces have fought bravely and well, and their dedication is unquestioned. But we should not ask them to make sacrifices unnecessary to our core national interests, particularly when doing so threatens long-term needs and priorities both at home and abroad.

Instead of toppling terrorists, America's Afghan war has become an ambitious and fruitless effort at ''nation-building.'' We are mired in a civil war in Afghanistan and are struggling to establish an effective central government in a country that has long been fragmented and decentralized.

No matter how desirable this objective might be in the abstract, it is not essential to U.S. security and it is not a goal for which the U.S. military is well suited. There is no clear definition of what would comprise ''success'' in this endeavor. Creating a unified Afghan state would require committing many more American lives and hundreds of billions of additional U.S. dollars for many years to come.

As the WikiLeaks war diary comprised of more than 91,000 secret reports on the Afghanistan War makes clear, any sense of American and allied progress in the conflict has been undermined by revelations that many more civilian deaths have occurred than have been officially acknowledged as the result of U.S. and allied strike accidents. The Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence continued to provide logistics and financial support to the Afghan Taliban even as U.S. soldiers were fighting these units. It is clear that Karzai government affiliates and appointees in rural Afghanistan have often proven to be more corrupt and ruthless than the Taliban.

Prospects for success are dim. As former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger recently warned, ''Afghanistan has never been pacified by foreign forces.'' The 2010 spring offensive in Marjah was inconclusive, and a supposedly ''decisive'' summer offensive in Kandahar has been delayed and the expectations downgraded. U.S. and allied casualties reached an all-time high in July, and several NATO allies have announced plans to withdraw their own forces.

The conflict in Afghanistan is commonly perceived as a struggle between the Karzai government and an insurgent Taliban movement, allied with international terrorists, that is seeking to overthrow that government. In fact, the conflict is a civil war about power-sharing with lines of contention that are 1) partly ethnic, chiefly, but not exclusively, between Pashtuns who dominate the south and other ethnicities such as Tajiks and Uzbeks who are more prevalent in the north, 2) partly rural vs. urban, particularly within the Pashtun community, and 3) partly sectarian.

The Afghanistan conflict also includes the influence of surrounding nations with a desire to advance their own interests—including India, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and others. And with the U.S. intervention in force, the conflict includes resistance to what is seen as foreign military occupation.

Resolving the conflict in Afghanistan has primarily to do with resolving the distribution of power among these factions and between the central government and the provinces, and with appropriately decentralizing authority.

Negotiated resolution of these conflicts will reduce the influence of extremists more readily than military action will. The Taliban itself is not a unified movement but instead a label that is applied to many armed groups and individuals that are only loosely aligned and do not necessarily have a fondness for the fundamentalist ideology of the most prominent Taliban leaders.

The Study Group believes the war in Afghanistan has reached a critical crossroads. Our current path promises to have limited impact on the civil war while taking more American lives and contributing to skyrocketing taxpayer debt. We conclude that a fundamentally new direction is needed, one that recognizes the United States' legitimate interests in Central Asia and is fashioned to advance them. Far from admitting ''defeat,'' the new way forward acknowledges the manifold limitations of a military solution in a region where our interests lie in political stability. Our recommended policy shifts our resources to focus on U.S. foreign policy strengths in concert with the international community to promote reconciliation among the warring parties, advance economic development, and encourage region-wide diplomatic engagement.

We base these conclusions on the following key points raised in the Study Group's research and discussions:

The United States has only two vital interests in the Af/Pak region: 1) preventing Afghanistan from being a ''safe haven'' from which Al Qaeda or other extremists can organize more effective attacks on the U.S. homeland; and 2) ensuring that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal does not fall into hostile hands.

Protecting our interests does not require a U.S. military victory over the Taliban. A Taliban takeover is unlikely even if the United States reduces its military commitment. The Taliban is a rural insurgency rooted primarily in Afghanistan's Pashtun population, and succeeded due in some part to the disenfranchisement of rural Pashtuns. The Taliban's seizure of power in the 1990s was due to an unusual set of circumstances that no longer exist and are unlikely to be repeated.

There is no significant Al Qaeda presence in Afghanistan today, and the risk of a new ''safe haven'' there under more ''friendly'' Taliban rule is overstated. Should an Al Qaeda cell regroup in Afghanistan, the U.S. would have residual military capability in the region sufficient to track and destroy it.

Al Qaeda sympathizers are now present in many locations globally, and defeating the Taliban will have little effect on Al Qaeda's global reach. The ongoing threat from Al Qaeda is better met via specific counter-terrorism measures, a reduced U.S. military ''footprint'' in the Islamic world, and diplomatic efforts to improve America's overall image and undermine international support for militant extremism.

Given our present economic circumstances, reducing the staggering costs of the Afghan war is an urgent priority. Maintaining the long-term health of the U.S. economy is just as important to American strength and security as protecting U.S. soil from enemy (including terrorist) attacks.

The continuation of an ambitious U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan will likely work against U.S. interests. A large U.S. presence fosters local (especially Pashtun) resentment and aids Taliban recruiting. It also fosters dependence on the part of our Afghan partners and encourages closer cooperation among a disparate array of extremist groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan alike.

Past efforts to centralize power in Afghanistan have provoked the same sort of local resistance that is convulsing Afghanistan today. There is ample evidence that this effort will join others in a long line of failed incursions.

Although the United States should support democratic rule, human rights and economic development, its capacity to mold other societies is inherently limited. The costs of trying should be weighed against our need to counter global terrorist threats directly, reduce America's $1.4 trillion budget deficit, repair eroding U.S. infrastructure, and other critical national purposes. Our support of these issues will be better achieved as part of a coordinated international group with which expenses and burdens can be shared.

The bottom line is clear: Our vital interests in Afghanistan are limited and military victory is not the key to achieving them.

On the contrary, waging a lengthy counterinsurgency war in Afghanistan may well do more to aid Taliban recruiting than to dismantle the group, help spread conflict further into Pakistan, unify radical groups that might otherwise be quarreling amongst themselves, threaten the long-term health of the U.S. economy, and prevent the U.S. government from turning its full attention to other pressing problems.

The more promising path for the U.S. in the Af/Pak region would reverse the recent escalation and move away from a counterinsurgency effort that is neither necessary nor likely to succeed. Instead, the U.S. should:

1. Emphasize power-sharing and political inclusion. The U.S. should fast-track a peace process designed to decentralize power within Afghanistan and encourage a power-sharing balance among the principal parties.

2. Downsize and eventually end military operations in southern Afghanistan, and reduce the U.S. military footprint. The U.S. should draw down its military presence, which radicalizes many Pashtuns and is an important aid to Taliban recruitment.

3. Focus security efforts on Al Qaeda and Domestic Security. Special forces, intelligence assets, and other U.S. capabilities should continue to seek out and target known Al Qaeda cells in the region. They can be ready to go after Al Qaeda should they attempt to relocate elsewhere or build new training facilities. In addition, part of the savings from our drawdown should be reallocated to bolster U.S. domestic security efforts and to track nuclear weapons globally.

4. Encourage economic development. Because destitute states can become incubators for terrorism, drug and human trafficking, and other illicit activities, efforts at reconciliation should be paired with an internationally-led effort to develop Afghanistan's economy.

5. Engage regional and global stakeholders in a diplomatic effort designed to guarantee Afghan neutrality and foster regional stability. Despite their considerable differences, neighboring states such as India, Pakistan, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia share a common interest in preventing Afghanistan from being dominated by any single power or being a permanently failed state that exports instability to others.

We believe this strategy will best serve the interests of women in Afghanistan as well. The worst thing for women is for Afghanistan to remain paralyzed in a civil war in which there evolves no organically rooted support for their social advancement.

The remainder of this report elaborates the logic behind these recommendations. It begins by summarizing U.S. vital interests, including our limited interests in Afghanistan itself and in the region more broadly. It then considers why the current strategy is failing and why the situation is unlikely to improve even under a new commander. The final section outlines ''A New Way Forward'' and explains how a radically different approach can achieve core U.S. goals at an acceptable cost.

AMERICA'S INTERESTS

The central goal of U.S. foreign and defense policy is to ensure the safety and prosperity of the American people. In practical terms, this means deterring or thwarting direct attacks on the U.S. homeland, while at the same time maintaining the long-term

health of the U.S. economy. A sound economy is the foundation of all national power, and it is critical to our ability to shape the global order and preserve our core values and independence over the long-term. The United States must therefore avoid an open-ended commitment in Afghanistan, especially when the costs of military engagement exceed the likely benefits.

What Is at Stake in Afghanistan?

The United States has only two vital strategic interests in Afghanistan. Its first strategic interest is to reduce the threat of successful terrorist attacks against the United States. In operational terms, the goal is to prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a ''safe haven'' that could significantly enhance Al Qaeda's ability to organize and conduct attacks on the United States.

The United States drove Al Qaeda out of Afghanistan in 2002, and Al Qaeda's presence in Afghanistan is now negligible. Al Qaeda's remaining founders are believed to be in hiding in northwest Pakistan, though affiliated cells are now active in Somalia, Yemen, and several other countries. These developments suggest that even a successful counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan would have only a limited effect on Al Qaeda's ability to conduct terrorist attacks against the United States and its allies. To the extent that our presence facilitates jihadi recruitment and draws resources away from focused counterterror efforts, it may even be counterproductive.

The second vital U.S. interest is to keep the conflict in Afghanistan from sowing instability elsewhere in Central Asia. Such discord might one day threaten the stability of the Pakistani state and the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. If the Pakistani government were to fall to radical extremists, or if terrorists were able to steal or seize either a weapon or sufficient nuclear material, then the danger of a nuclear terrorist incident would increase significantly. It is therefore important that our strategy in Afghanistan avoids making the situation in Pakistan worse.

Fortunately, the danger of a radical takeover of the Pakistani government is small. Islamist extremism in Pakistan is concentrated within the tribal areas in its northwest frontier, and largely confined to its Pashtun minority (which comprises about 15 percent of the population). The Pakistani army is primarily Punjabi (roughly 44 percent of the population) and remains loyal. At present, therefore, this second strategic interest is not seriously threatened.

Beyond these vital strategic interests, the United States also favors democratic rule, human rights, and economic development. These goals are consistent with traditional U.S. values and reflect a longstanding belief that democracy and the rule of law are preferable to authoritarianism. The U.S. believes that stable and prosperous democracies are less likely to threaten their neighbors or to challenge core U.S. interests. Helping the Afghan people rebuild after decades of war is also appealing on purely moral grounds.

Yet these latter goals, however worthy in themselves, do not justify a costly and open-ended commitment to war in Afghanistan. Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world and is of little intrinsic strategic value to the United States. (Recent reports of sizeable mineral resources do not alter this basic reality.) Afghan society is divided into several distinct ethnic groups with a long history of conflict, it lacks strong democratic traditions, and there is a deeply rooted suspicion of foreign interference.

It follows that a strategy for Afghanistan must rest on a clear-eyed assessment of U.S. interests and a realistic appraisal of what outside help can and cannot accomplish. It must also take care to ensure that specific policy actions do not undermine the vital interests identified above. The current U.S. strategy has lost sight of these considerations, which is why our war effort there is faltering.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD an article by Amanda Terkel of the Huffington Post that says that military commanders expect the United States to have a significant presence in Afghanistan for another 8 to 10 years, this according to a Member of Congress who was there.

[From huffingtonpost.com, Mar. 10, 2011]

COMMANDERS EXPECT A 'SIGNIFICANT' U.S. PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN FOR 8 TO 10 MORE YEARS: DEM REP

(By Amanda Terkel)

WASHINGTON.—Military commanders expect the United States to have a ''significant presence'' in Afghanistan for another eight to 10 years, according to a member of Congress who just returned from a trip to the region and has introduced legislation calling for a full accounting of the costs of the war.

Rep. Bruce Braley (D–Iowa) spent his congressional four-day weekend on a fact-finding trip to Afghanistan, meeting with Gen. David Petraeus, Amb. Karl Eikenberry and members of the Iowa National Guard. In an interview with The Huffington Post on Wednesday, Braley said that while there has clearly been some significant progress, challenges will remain even after 2014, when combat operations are supposed to end.

''It was very clear that under the best-case scenario, there will be some significant U.S. presence, according to them, for the next eight to 10 years,'' Braley said, adding that he expected that presence to include both military and civilian personnel. ''That includes a very clear commitment that the drawdown will begin on schedule in July, and that the targeted date of being out with most combat forces by 2014 will be met. They continue to maintain that they are on pace to maintain those objectives.''

The key transition benchmark, Braley said, will be the readiness of local law enforcement to assume principal responsibility of what are now largely U.S. security operations. ''I think that the whole point is to transition the burden of maintaining security to the Afghan army and Afghan police, but there would be an obviously advisory role, they anticipate, for the U.S. military for the foreseeable future,'' he said. ''The big question right now is when they start drawing down in July, where they're going to do that and the size of the redeployment.''

Pentagon spokespersons told The Huffington Post that the Defense Department is not ready to discuss specific timelines at this point, and so far, no U.S. military or NATO official has publicly cited the time frame mentioned by Braley.

On Monday, Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who was also in Afghanistan to meet with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, said that both countries agree U.S. involvement should continue beyond 2014, although he didn't specify at what levels or for how long.

''I would say that if the Afghan people and the Afghan government are interested in an ongoing security relationship and some sort of an ongoing security presence—with the permission of the Afghan government—the United States, I think, is open to the possibility of having some presence here in terms of training and assistance, perhaps making use of facilities made available to us by the Afghan government for those purposes,'' said Gates. ''We have no interest in permanent bases, but if the Afghans want us here, we are certainly prepared to contemplate that,''

While in Afghanistan, Gates also said that there were unlikely to be U.S. withdrawals in July from the hard-fought areas of the south—Helmand and Kandahar provinces. But he added, ''While no decisions on numbers have been made, in my view, we will be well-positioned to begin drawing down some U.S. and coalition forces this July, even as we redeploy others to different areas of the country.''

Braley said that one of the most profound comments made by Petraeus during their meeting was that there wasn't the ''right combination at play'' in Afghanistan until the fall of last year, which accounts for the slow pace of progress. Incidentally, Petraeus took command in Afghanistan from ousted Gen. Stanley McChrystal in June.

''One of the significant challenges that you face is dealing with a sovereign state that was sovereign in name only, which was a comment that Ambassador Eikenberry made,'' said Braley. ''You've got a country with a high illiteracy rate, so that when Afghan army and police are trained, they are also being taught to read and basic math skills. It's a very long-term project to get Afghanistan to the point where it can sustain itself economically. That doesn't even take into account the activities that are going on in Pakistan, which have enormous implications in Afghanistan.''

On Wednesday, Braley, a member of the House Committee on Veterans. Affairs, introduced the True Cost of War Act, which would require the president and pertinent cabinet members to submit a written report to Congress on the long-term human and financial costs of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan through 2020.

Braley said this legislation has been a priority of his since he came to Congress in 2006, in large part because of the toll the Iraq war was taking on the country.

''The whole point of my legislation is that the American people—especially at a time when Republicans have been pushing all these budget cuts—are entitled to know what the true costs are, because the young men and women coming back with these injuries certainly have a clear understanding of what they are,'' he said.

Braley added that on his trip, he brought up this issue at nearly every single briefing he attended, recounting the experiences he had just before his trip visiting wounded soldiers and their families who had been treated at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. and the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in D.C.

''I wanted them to realize that in a single congressional district in Iowa, the implications of this war were enormous,'' said Braley. ''I have to tell you that I was very impressed by how moved the people I shared those experiences with were. They tend to get caught up in talking policies, numbers and long-term objectives, and I think they appreciated the fact that I brought it down to a very real, human level.''

On Monday, Rasmussen released a poll finding that for the first time, a majority of Americans want U.S. troops withdrawn from Afghanistan within one year.

I include for the RECORD a statement relating to a challenging of the claims of progress in Afghanistan that I issued 2 days ago.

DEAR COLLEAGUE: Today, many of us are hearing from General Petraeus that ''significant'' progress is being made in Afghanistan. We have heard it before. Military and civilian leaders have, for years, told lawmakers and the public that they were making ''progress'' in Afghanistan. For instance:

In a speech to a joint session of Congress in 2004, President Karzai said, ''You [Americans] came to Afghanistan to defeat terrorism, and we Afghans welcomed and embraced you for the liberation of our country. . . . This road, this journey is one of success and victory.''

In a joint press conference with President Karzai after that speech, President Bush said, ''Today we witness the rebirth of a vibrant Afghan culture. Music fills the marketplaces and people are free to come together to celebrate in open. . . . Years of war and tyranny have eroded Afghanistan's economy and infrastructure, yet a revival is under way.''

At another joint press conference with President Karzai in March of 2006, President Bush said, ''We are impressed by the progress that your country is making, Mr. President [Karzai], a lot of it has to do with your leadership.''

In February of 2007, Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry told National Public Radio that Afghanistan was ''on the steady path, right now . . . to, I believe, success.''

In April 2008, President Bush told news reporters, ''I think we're making good progress in Afghanistan.''

October 2008, General McKiernan, Commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, told the press ''We are not losing in Afghanistan.'' In May 2009, he was replaced by General McChrystal.

October 2008, President Bush said Afghanistan is ''a situation where there's been progress and there are difficulties.''

November 2009, President Obama, visiting troops in Afghanistan, reportedly said, ''Because of the progress we're making, we look forward to a new phase next year, the beginning of the transition to Afghan responsibility.''

December 2009, General Stanley McChrystal, the top commander, predicted that the U.S. troop buildup in Afghanistan will make ''significant progress'' in turning back the Taliban and securing the country by the coming summer. ''By next summer I expect there to be significant progress that is evident to us,'' McChrystal said in congressional testimony.

In January 2010, General McChrystal was asked by Diane Sawyer, ''Have you turned the tide?'' McChrystal answered, ''I believe we are doing that now.''

In May 2010, General McChrystal told Congress that he saw ''progress'' in Afghanistan.

In May 2010, President Obama told the press that ''we've begun to reverse the momentum'' in Afghanistan.

In June 2010, Secretary Gates told a Congressional committee that we are ''making headway'' in Afghanistan. In June 2010, General McChrystal was replaced by General Petraeus.

In August 2010, General Petraeus said, ''there's progress being made'' in Afghanistan.

In February 2011, General Petraeus said, ''We have achieved what we set out to achieve in 2010'' which was to reverse the insurgency momentum, solidify our accomplishments, and build on successes. ''We took away safe havens and the infrastructure that goes with it.''

The President has requested another $113.4 billion to continue the war in Afghanistan in FY12. That sum will be on top of $454.7 billion already spent (and borrowed) on the war to date. On Thursday, March 17, 2011, Congress will have the opportunity to consider whether all of this ''progress'' has been worth the money. It is time for Congress to exercise fiscal responsibility and to assume its Constitutional responsibilities and end the war in Afghanistan. Vote YES on H. Con. Res. 28 and direct the President to end this war by the end of the year.

Sincerely,

DENNIS J. KUCINICH,
Member of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS).

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I have a senior member of the Judiciary Committee on the floor with me, the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN). I don't see any other members here. But this is an important matter for the Judiciary Committee in that article I, section 8, says only Congress has the right to declare war.

Obviously, we haven't declared war in a very, very long time, so I think that we have to find out what is the constitutional basis that we are operating under in—well, I will skip Iraq. We all know that was based on false information promulgated from the President of the United States.

□ 1150

But, now, getting to Afghanistan, we find that we have a resolution dating back to September 14, 2011, a use of force resolution. But that has expired, by any rational investigation of it. It was designed to respond to the 9/11 terrorist attack and to fight al Qaeda. But today we're in Afghanistan on a long-term effort at rebuilding the nation. Nation building is unrelated to that original resolution. And now we're in Afghanistan and an unlawful incursion into Pakistan.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. KUCINICH. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. CONYERS. So now we're in Pakistan and the CIA is operating covert combat activities there, and those are unlawful. We're violating the UN Charter, which we are supposed to be a leader in. And so the Obama administration is carrying on the same military operations of its predecessor.

Mr. BERMAN. May I inquire how much time is remaining on the time allotted to me?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 22 minutes remaining.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask unanimous consent that 8 of those 22 minutes be yielded to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON), who is now controlling the time for the majority on the committee.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) will control 8 minutes.

Mr. BERMAN. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I just want to take a couple of minutes to talk about one point. That part of the majority party that is urging the same position I am on this resolution, which is a ''no'' vote, has made the argument a number of times that when you're dealing with fundamental issues of national security, you spend money, even under difficult times, a point that I have no disagreement with. And they argue the issue of what the alternatives will be and the potential for providing new safe havens for terrorists or more safe havens for terrorists or a return of Afghanistan as a safe haven for terrorists if we pass this resolution, and I don't disagree with that point.

What I find upsetting about the majority's position is their denial of the fundamental point. They quote General Petraeus for every position that they find philosophically and factually satisfying and ignore General Petraeus and Secretary Gates on the fundamental concept of how we hope to change the course of what is happening in Afghanistan. Because if we don't change it, then we have to come and address the fundamental question of what we're doing there through a counterinsurgency strategy.

So we talk about clear and hold and build. And it is the military's job to clear and, for a time, to hold, but build is fundamentally a civilian program. General Petraeus over and over again has said this conflict in Afghanistan cannot be won unless we strengthen the governance of a very flawed government in Afghanistan, unless we provide economic opportunities for that society to progress and win the hearts and minds of the people of Afghanistan to the cause for which we are fighting.

It's also a view of Afghanistan as if it's isolated from the rest of the world. I can go through countries around the world—failed states, nearly failing states, terrible problems—which are certainly becoming safe harbors for terrorism.

So when the same party that makes a strong case for our national security interests here at the same time passes legislation which slashes every aspect of efforts to strengthen governance and development assistance and to provide the kinds of opportunities that serve our national security interests, I find it a strange kind of logic and a flaw in their approach to this.

I understand the economic hardships we have. If one wanted to look at the foreign assistance budget and take specific things that aren't working and get rid of them, I understand that, and if one wanted to make proportional cuts in the foreign assistance budget. But to come with the argument of, ''We're broke; we've got to cut spending,'' and then disproportionately focus on that aspect of our national security strategy which will do a tremendous amount and will be fundamental to any effort to stop them from being safe harbors for terrorism, and that is to massively slash disproportionately foreign assistance, it's a terrible mistake. It terribly undermines the national security strategy that we're trying to achieve through our operations and our presence and the money we're spending

in Afghanistan. It's not thinking, I think, as clearly as needs to be thought. And I urge those in the majority to think again about how much the cuts that we need to make should be coming from that part of the budget that constitutes 1 percent of the Federal budget.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from California, I have great respect for him in many, many ways. We talk about we've got to enhance the governance of Afghanistan. Well, this is President Karzai's quote from March 12, 2001. I have read it before, but I want to submit it for the RECORD:

''I request that NATO and America should stop these operations on our soil,'' Karzai said. ''This war is not on our soil. If this war is against terror, then this war is not here. Terror is not here.''

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. GRIFFIN), the vice chair of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe and Eurasia, and an Iraq war veteran who continues to serve as a major in the U.S. Army Reserves.

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas. I rise today in opposition to H. Con. Res. 28 because it would undermine our national security and our ability to keep us safe right here at home. I understand that many Americans are frustrated with the length of this war. I also understand the American people have demanded the U.S. Government get its fiscal house in order. I know we cannot afford to fund this war indefinitely. But some think that cutting and running immediately from Afghanistan is the solution. That's simply not an option.

This is a reckless resolution. We've made progress in Afghanistan, and we cannot afford to abandon that progress by immediately withdrawing our troops. What we must do, however, is demand that our military and civilian leaders set clear and definable goals for our military efforts in Afghanistan. We also must listen to our military commanders who are there on the ground day in and day out.

General Petraeus has testified to our military's substantial progress in impeding the Taliban's influence and increasing the number of Afghan security forces. He cautioned, however, that this recent success is fragile and reversible.

We must allow our troops to remain in Afghanistan to defeat the Taliban and al Qaeda so that we can keep Americans safe here. We must continue to train and support local security forces because this will bring about the safe and successful full transition of the country's security to the Afghan people.

□ 1200

To withdraw now, to withdraw immediately, would be to forfeit that progress and allow the Taliban and other extremists to regain their footing in Afghanistan.

We must honor the men and women of our Armed Forces, who have fought so hard. We must honor the men and women of the international armed forces, who have fought so hard. We must honor the men and women of the Afghan forces, who have fought hard to defend their own country. They have sacrificed so much, and we cannot abandon them now. Most importantly, it is not in our national interest to do so.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Mr. BERMAN for giving us 8 minutes of his time, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KUCINICH. May I ask, Mr. Speaker, how much time each group has remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Florida controls 22 minutes; the gentleman from Ohio controls 22 minutes; the gentleman from California controls 9½ minutes; and the gentleman from North Carolina controls 16 minutes.

Mr. KUCINICH. I yield myself 1 minute.

Mr. Speaker, Members of this House are talking about cutting $100 billion from the budget. Well, we can trim the Federal budget of more than $100 billion in out-of-control spending.

Members have been very concerned about out-of-control spending. They are calling for a reduction in the Federal budget. Cutting spending on the war in Afghanistan would solve their concerns. Spending on the war is greater than the minimum amount of Federal spending certain Members believe must be cut from the budget for fiscal responsibility.

In the fiscal year 2012 budget request, the President has requested $113.4 billion to continue the war. In fact, congressional appropriations of over $100 billion for the Afghanistan war has been the rule in recent years; and as we've seen, there is talk of extending this war for another 10 years. $1 trillion, perhaps?

Spending on the Afghanistan war has increased much faster than overall government spending in recent years. Consider a comparison of the average annual rates of growth of government spending versus the Afghanistan war spending from 2008 through 2011.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. KUCINICH. I yield myself 10 more seconds.

Overall government spending has increased 9 percent from 2008 through 2011, but Afghanistan war spending has increased 25 percent. If you want to save $100 billion, then vote for this resolution.

I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

(Mr. FILNER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FILNER. Mr. KUCINICH, I thank you for your courage in bringing this debate to the floor. It's like the 600-pound elephant in the Nation. This war has gone on and on—and we never discuss it.

I want to applaud the courage of Mr. JONES from North Carolina. He has taken more than a lot of grief from his own party, and he has stood up to that with courage that is admirable.

I want to look at this debate, my colleagues, from the point of view of former chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, a position in which I was honored to serve.

Mr. KUCINICH, I think you underestimate the cost of this war. I've never seen you so conservative.

I had a hearing last year before the Veterans' Affairs Committee in which Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stigleitz testified. He said these wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will be $5 trillion to $7 trillion wars over their whole course. Let us not forget—and that's not calculated in your costs. Mr. KUCINICH—the veterans, those who have served in this war with great courage, with great professionalism. Treating these veterans costs hundreds of billions of dollars more, and we're not considering that when we talk about ending this war.

We've been told that there have been about 45,000 casualties in these two wars in the last 10 years. Then why have almost 1 million people shown up at the Veterans Administration hospitals for war-related injuries? One million. This is not a rounding error. This is a deliberate attempt to misguide us on the cost of this war. This war is costing, in addition to what the budget says, hundreds of billions more for treating our veterans. We must calculate that into the cost of this war.

When you guys say, ''deficit and debt,'' we are going to say, ''Afghanistan.''

In recent weeks, we have heard much from our Republican colleagues about out-of-control Federal spending. They want to cut $100 billion from our budget.

If my friends are serious about cutting the budget, they should vote for H. Con. Res. 28.

Since 2001, our Nation has wasted $1.121 trillion on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. We are spending $5.4 billion a month in Iraq and $5.7 billion a month in Afghanistan. This is a waste of our national resources and taxpayer funding!

For FY2012, the President has requested $113.4 billion to continue the war in Afghanistan.

Between 2008 through 2011, overall government spending went up 9 percent annually. But this is nothing compared to the 25 percent annual increase in spending in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, spending on the Afghanistan war is rising at an accelerating rate. Over just three years (2010, 2011, and 2012), we will spend 45 percent more on the war in Afghanistan than we did in the preceding 8 years!

There is no better example of out-of-control Federal spending.

If Congress is really serious about being fiscally responsible and about cutting the Federal budget by three figures, then cutting spending on the out-of-control, hundred billion dollar a

year war in Afghanistan must be a serious consideration.

Today, we have an opportunity to do just that! A Yes vote will cut the 2012 budget by at least $113.4 billion.

If you are serious about reducing the deficit, then vote "yes" on H. Con. Res. 28!

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER).

Mr. ROHRABACHER. You're someone who says ''billions of dollars'' and ''Afghanistan'' both.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the resolution and in support of our military personnel who are putting their lives in jeopardy in Afghanistan. They are doing their duty for us, for which every American should be eternally grateful. Now we must do our duty to them. If our military is engaged in a dangerous mission that we believe cannot be successful and but for face-saving we are keeping them there, we are doing a disservice to our defenders and to our Nation.

The people of Afghanistan are as courageous and independent as any on Earth. They are indomitable and unconquerable—a lesson invaders have learned the hard way for centuries. The liberation of Afghanistan from the Taliban was accomplished, not by a massive influx of American troops, but instead by fighters of the Northern Alliance militia and the air support that we provided them. It was a tremendous success.

When they were doing the fighting, it was a success. When we try to do the fighting all over the world, we lose. We cannot be a Nation that occupies the rest of the world. We cannot be a country that sends its troops all over the world to handle every problem.

After the great success of eliminating the Taliban from Afghanistan, our foreign policy bureaucracy, not our troops, set in place a government structure totally inconsistent with the village and tribal culture of the Afghan people. That information is no surprise to anybody. Most of us understand that.

They have a tribal culture there in Afghanistan and a village system. That is what works for them. Our State Department has tried to foist upon them a centralized system in which they don't even elect their provincial governors. After being liberated from the Taliban by Afghans, our troops are now there to force the Afghan people to accept an overly centralized and corrupt system which was put in place by our State Department bureaucracy.

I'm sorry, it won't work. It will not work. Any attempt to subjugate these people and to force them to acquiesce to our vision of Afghanistan will fail. We all understand that. If we are honest with ourselves, we know that that tactic won't succeed. To keep our troops over there any longer is sinful. It is a disservice to our country, and it is also sinful to those young men who are willing to give their legs and their lives for us.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. JONES. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. It is now up to us in Congress to stand up for those Americans in uniform who will be needlessly giving their lives to accomplish a mission that cannot be accomplished. If it can't be done, we should not be sending them over there.

The most responsible course of action is to, as quickly as possible, get our people out of this predicament, not to dig us in deeper and not to wait until this bloody quagmire kills even more Americans and we have to leave without success. If we can't win, we should pull out now.

Mr. JONES. I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to a gentleman who knows a lot about the threats that are facing our Nation, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. ROGERS), the chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

□ 1210

Mr. ROGERS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of power and emotion in this debate today, and I'm glad for that. There should be.

I recall the first time I had the chance to get to Afghanistan in late 2003. I met a woman there who had been trained as a doctor in the United States. She went to practice medicine in her home country of Afghanistan. When the Taliban took over, they stripped her of her medical duties. They sent her home. She was imprisoned in her own home for 6 years. I met her at a children's hospital, and in the days of the first conflict, she stripped off her burka, she walked 10 miles to the town to show up to provide medical care for the first time to these children as a woman in Afghanistan. With tears in her eyes she said, Thank you. These children have no chance. Afghanistan has no future.

And we saw the soccer field where they took people down and summarily executed them for violations that they deemed to be executable offenses under no law of their own, the burned buses where the modern conveniences were burned to get them out of the system when the Taliban took over to apply sharia law. And none of that would matter from the pain and the loss if you've attended one of these fine soldier's funerals; it is an emotional thing, and there is pain, and hurt, and sorrow, and something lost in all of us.

So none of those other things would be alone a reason to send our soldiers to risk their lives in defense of this country, but because of the things I talked about, because they have imprisoned women in Afghanistan, because of the things that they've done to the people there, it created hate and ignorance and brutality, and al Qaeda saw an advantage, and they took it. They established there a safe haven where they recruited, where they financed, where they planned, where they armed themselves, where they recruited people around the world from other countries to come to train, and they sent some of them to the United States of America to slaughter 3,000 people.

And if you want to talk about money, the trillion-plus dollars that 9/11 has cost us just in economic loss, that's why we're there. We should not forget the mission today and why they risk their lives. If you want to talk about the State Department policies, I'm all in. I'd love to have that debate. If you want to talk about rules of engagement, I'm in, that's a place, let's do it, let's have that debate.

But if you want to tell the enemy today—and by the way, for the first time, we've got information that their commanders are saying we don't want to go fight. The spring offensive is being planned now, right now. Our soldiers are preparing for battle right now. This may be that last great battle in Afghanistan on behalf of our soldiers to eliminate the major components of the Taliban taking over their country.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. ROGERS of Michigan. So if that woman doctor who trained here, taking care of kids, who cried for help and support doesn't move you, and maybe it shouldn't; for the pain of that funeral, that loss, that soldier who gave it all for this country doesn't move; then what ought to move you is the fact that these folks are gearing up and hoping and praying that we give up and we pull these troops out before the mission is done.

We all want them home. We want them home with no safe haven and a way that we can continue to put pressure on al Qaeda and its supporting affiliates.

Mr. KUCINICH. I would like to include in the RECORD an article on AlterNet by Tom Engelhardt which discusses the open-ended nature of the Afghanistan war.

HOW TO SCHEDULE A WAR: THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WITHDRAWAL DATE

(By Tom Engelhardt)

Going, going, gone! You can almost hear the announcer's voice throbbing with excitement, only we're not talking about home runs here, but about the disappearing date on which, for the United States and its military, the Afghan War will officially end.

Practically speaking, the answer to when it will be over is: just this side of never. If you take the word of our Afghan War commander, the secretary of defense, and top officials of the Obama administration and NATO, we're not leaving any time soon. As with any clever time traveler, every date that's set always contains a verbal escape hatch into the future.

In my 1950s childhood, there was a cheesy (if thrilling) sci-fi flick, The Incredible Shrinking Man, about a fellow who passed

through a radioactive cloud in the Pacific Ocean and soon noticed that his suits were too big for him. Next thing you knew, he was living in a doll house, holding off his pet cat, and fighting an ordinary spider transformed into a monster. Finally, he disappeared entirely leaving behind only a sonorous voice to tell us that he had entered a universe where ''the unbelievably small and the unbelievably vast eventually meet, like the closing of a gigantic circle.''

In recent weeks, without a radioactive cloud in sight, the date for serious drawdowns of American troops in Afghanistan has followed a similar path toward the vanishing point and is now threatening to disappear ''over the horizon'' (a place where, we are regularly told, American troops will lurk once they have finally handed their duties over to the Afghan forces they are training).

If you remember, back in December 2009 President Obama spoke of July 2011 as a firm date to ''begin the transfer of our forces out of Afghanistan,'' the moment assumedly when the beginning of the end of the war would come into sight. In July of this year, Afghan President Hamid Karzai spoke of 2014 as the date when Afghan security forces ''will be responsible for all military and law enforcement operations throughout our country.''

Administration officials, anxious about the effect that 2011 date was having on an American public grown weary of an unpopular war and on an enemy waiting for us to depart, grabbed Karzai's date and ran with it (leaving many of his caveats about the war the Americans were fighting, particularly his desire to reduce the American presence, in the dust). Now, 2014 is hyped as the new 2011.

It has, in fact, been widely reported that Obama officials have been working in concert to ''play down'' the president's 2011 date, while refocusing attention on 2014. In recent weeks, top administration officials have been little short of voluble on the subject. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates (''We're not getting out. We're talking about probably a years-long process.''), Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mike Mullen, attending a security conference in Australia, all ''cited 2014 . . . as the key date for handing over the defense of Afghanistan to the Afghans themselves.'' The New York Times headlined its report on the suddenly prominent change in timing this way: ''U.S. Tweaks Message on Troops in Afghanistan.''

Quite a tweak. Added Times reporter Elisabeth Bumiller: ''The message shift is effectively a victory for the military, which has long said the July 2011 deadline undermined its mission by making Afghans reluctant to work with troops perceived to be leaving shortly.''

INFLECTION POINTS AND ASPIRATIONAL GOALS

Barely had 2014 risen into the headlines, however, before that date, too, began to be chipped away. As a start, it turned out that American planners weren't talking about just any old day in 2014, but its last one. As Lieutenant General William Caldwell, head of the NATO training program for Afghan security forces, put it while holding a Q&A with a group of bloggers, ''They're talking about December 31st, 2014. It's the end of December in 2014 . . . that [Afghan] President Karzai has said they want Afghan security forces in the lead.''

Nor, officials rushed to say, was anyone talking about 2014 as a date for all American troops to head for the exits, just ''combat troops''—and maybe not even all of them. Possibly tens of thousands of trainers and other so-called non-combat forces would stay on to help with the ''transition process.'' This follows the Iraq pattern where 50,000 American troops remain after the departure of U.S. ''combat'' forces to great media fanfare. Richard Holbrooke, Obama's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, was typical in calling for ''the substantial combat forces [to] be phased out at the end of 2014, four years from now.'' (Note the usual verbal escape hatch, in this case ''substantial,'' lurking in his statement.)

Last Saturday, behind ''closed doors'' at a NATO summit in Lisbon, Portugal, Afghan War commander General David Petraeus presented European leaders with a ''phased four-year plan'' to ''wind down American and allied fighting in Afghanistan.'' Not surprisingly, it had the end of 2014 in its sights and the president quickly confirmed that ''transition'' date, even while opening plenty of post-2014 wiggle room. By then, as he described it, ''our footprint'' would only be ''significantly reduced.'' (He also claimed that, post-2014, the U.S. would be maintaining a ''counterterrorism capability'' in Afghanistan—and Iraq—for which ''platforms to . . . execute . . . counterterrorism operations,'' assumedly bases, would be needed.)

Meanwhile, unnamed ''senior U.S. officials'' in Lisbon were clearly buttonholing reporters to ''cast doubt on whether the United States, the dominant power in the 28-nation alliance, would end its own combat mission before 2015.'' As always, the usual qualifying phrases were profusely in evidence.

Throughout these weeks, the ''tweaking''—that is, the further chipping away at 2014 as a hard and fast date for anything—only continued. Mark Sedwill, NATO's civilian counterpart to U.S. commander General David Petraeus, insisted that 2014 was nothing more than ''an inflection point'' in an ever more drawn-out drawdown process. That process, he insisted, would likely extend to ''2015 and beyond,'' which, of course, put 2016 officially into play. And keep in mind that this is only for combat troops, not those assigned to ''train and support'' or keep ''a strategic over watch'' on Afghan forces.

On the eve of NATO's Lisbon meeting, Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell, waxing near poetic, declared 2014 nothing more than an ''aspirational goal,'' rather than an actual deadline. As the conference began, NATO's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen insisted that the alliance would be committed in Afghanistan ''as long as it takes.'' And new British Chief of the Defense Staff General Sir David Richards suggested that, given the difficulty of ever defeating the Taliban (or al-Qaeda) militarily, NATO should be preparing plans to maintain a role for its troops for the next 30 to 40 years.

WAR EXTENDER

Here, then, is a brief history of American time in Afghanistan. After all, this isn't our first Afghan War, but our second. The first, the CIA's anti-Soviet jihad (in which the Agency funded a number of the fundamentalist extremists we're now fighting in the second), lasted a decade, from 1980 until 1989 when the Soviets withdrew in defeat.

In October 2001, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration launched America's second Afghan War, taking Kabul that November as the Taliban dissolved. The power of the American military to achieve quick and total victory seemed undeniable, even after Osama bin Laden slipped out of Tora Bora that December and escaped into Pakistan's tribal borderlands.

However, it evidently never crossed the minds of President Bush's top officials to simply declare victory and get out. Instead, as the U.S. would do in Iraq after the invasion of 2003, the Pentagon started building a new infrastructure of military bases (in this case, on the ruins of the old Soviet base infrastructure). At the same time, the former Cold Warriors in Washington let their dreams about pushing the former commies of the former Soviet Union out of the former soviet socialist republics of Central Asia, places where, everyone knew, you could just about swim in black gold and run geopolitically wild.

Then, when the invasion of Iraq was launched in March 2003, Afghanistan, still a ''war'' (if barely) was forgotten, while the Taliban returned to the field, built up their strength, and launched an insurgency that has only gained momentum to this moment. In 2008, before leaving office, George W. Bush bumped his favorite general, Iraq surge commander Petraeus, upstairs to become the head of the Central Command which oversees America's war zones in the Greater Middle East, including Afghanistan.

Already the guru of counterinsurgency (known familiarly as COIN), Petraeus had, in 2006, overseen the production of the military's new war-fighting bible, a how-to manual dusted off from the Vietnam era's failed version of COIN and made new and magical again. In June 2010, eight and a half years into our Second Afghan War, at President Obama's request, Petraeus took over as Afghan War commander. It was clear then that time was short—with an administration review of Afghan war strategy coming up at year's end and results needed quickly. The American war was also in terrible shape.

In the new COIN-ish U.S. Army, however, it is a dogma of almost biblical faith that counterinsurgencies don't produce quick results; that, to be successful, they must be pursued for years on end. As Petraeus put it back in 2007 when talking about Iraq, ''[T]ypically, I think historically, counterinsurgency operations have gone at least nine or 10 years.'' Recently, in an interview with Martha Raddatz of ABC News, he made a nod toward exactly the same timeframe for Afghanistan, one accepted as bedrock knowledge in the world of the COINistas.

What this meant was that, whether as CENTCOM commander or Afghan War commander, Petraeus was looking for two potentially contradictory results at the same time. Somehow, he needed to wrest those nine to 10 years of war-fighting from a president looking for a tighter schedule and, in a war going terribly sour, he needed almost instant evidence of ''progress'' that would fit the president's coming December ''review'' of the war and might pacify unhappy publics in the U.S. and Europe.

Now let's do the math. At the moment, depending on how you care to count, we are in the 10th year of our second Afghan War or the 20th year of war interruptus. Since June 2009, Petraeus and various helpers have stretched the schedule to 2014 for (most) American combat troops and at least 2015 or 2016 for the rest. If you were to start counting from the president's December surge address, that's potentially seven more years. In other words, we're now talking about either a 15-year war or an on-and-off again quarter-century one. All evidence shows that the Pentagon's war planners would like to extend those already vague dates even further into the future.

ON TICKING CLOCKS IN WASHINGTON AND KABUL

Up to now, only one of General Petraeus's two campaigns has been under discussion here: the other one, fought out these last years not in Afghanistan, but in Washington and NATO capitals, over how to schedule a war. Think of it as the war for a free hand in determining how long the Afghan War is to be fought.

It has been run from General Petraeus's headquarters in Kabul, the giant five-sided

military headquarters on the Potomac presided over by Secretary of Defense Gates, and various think-tanks filled with America's militarized intelligentsia scattered around Washington—and it has proven a classically successful ''clear, hold, build'' counterinsurgency operation. Pacification in Washington and a number of European capitals has occurred with remarkably few casualties. (Former Afghan war commander General Stanley McChrystal, axed by the president for insubordination, has been the exception, not the rule.)

Slowly but decisively, Petraeus and company constricted President Obama's war-planning choices to two options: more and yet more. In late 2009, the president agreed to that second surge of troops (the first had been announced that March), not to speak of CIA agents, drones, private contractors, and State Department and other civilian government employees. In his December ''surge'' address at West Point (for the nation but visibly to the military), Obama had the temerity as commander-in-chief to name a specific, soon-to-arrive date—July 2011—for beginning a serious troop drawdown. It was then that the COIN campaign in Washington ramped up into high gear with the goal of driving the prospective end of the war back by years.

It took bare hours after the president's address for administration officials to begin leaking to media sources that his drawdown would be ''conditions based''—a phrase guaranteed to suck the meaning out of any deadline. (The president had indeed acknowledged in his address that his administration would take into account ''conditions on the ground.'') Soon, the Secretary of Defense and others took to the airwaves in a months-long campaign emphasizing that drawdown in Afghanistan didn't really mean drawdown, that leaving by no means meant leaving, and that the future was endlessly open to interpretation.

With the ratification in Lisbon of that 2014 date ''and beyond,'' the political clocks—an image General Petraeus loves—in Washington, European capitals, and American Kabul are now ticking more or less in unison.

Two other ''clocks'' are, however, ticking more like bombs. If counterinsurgency is a hearts and minds campaign, then the other target of General Petraeus's first COIN campaign has been the restive hearts and minds of the American and European publics. Last year a Dutch government fell over popular opposition to Afghanistan and, even as NATO met last weekend, thousands of antiwar protestors marched in London and Lisbon. Europeans generally want out and their governments know it, but (as has been true since 1945) the continent's leaders have no idea how to say ''no'' to Washington. In the U.S., too, the Afghan war grows ever more unpopular, and while it was forgotten during the election season, no politician should count on that phenomenon lasting forever.

And then, of course, there's the literal ticking bomb, the actual war in Afghanistan. In that campaign, despite a drumbeat of American/NATO publicity about ''progress,'' the news has been grim indeed. American and NATO casualties have been higher this year than at any other moment in the war; the Taliban seems if anything more entrenched in more parts of the country; the Afghan public, ever more puzzled and less happy with foreign troops and contractors traipsing across the land; and Hamid Karzai, the president of the country, sensing a situation gone truly sour, has been regularly challenging the way General Petraeus is fighting the war in his country. (The nerve!)

No less unsettling, General Petraeus himself has seemed unnerved. He was declared ''irked'' by Karzai's comments and was said to have warned Afghan officials that their president's criticism might be making his ''own position 'untenable,' '' which was taken as a resignation threat. Meanwhile, the COIN-meister was in the process of imposing a new battle plan on Afghanistan that leaves counterinsurgency (at least as usually described) in a roadside ditch. No more is the byword ''protect the people,'' or ''clear, hold, build''; now, it's smash, kill, destroy. The war commander has loosed American firepower in a major way in the Taliban strongholds of southern Afghanistan.

Early this year, then-commander McChrystal had significantly cut back on U.S. air strikes as a COIN-ish measure meant to lessen civilian casualties. No longer. In a striking reversal, air power has been called in—and in a big way. In October, U.S. planes launched missiles or bombs on 1,000 separate Afghan missions, numbers seldom seen since the 2001 invasion. The Army has similarly loosed its massively powerful High Mobility Artillery Rocket System in the area around the southern city of Kandahar. Civilian deaths are rising rapidly.

Mr. KUCINICH. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

We keep coming back to 9/11. We're near the eighth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, which had nothing to do with 9/11, and which was predicated on a lie, no weapons of mass destruction. The war in Afghanistan is based on a misreading of history. The Soviet Union understood that at hard cost. The occupation is fueling an insurgency.

Now, Jeremy Scahill in the Nation points out that Taliban leaders have said they've seen a swelling in Taliban ranks since 9/11 in part attributed to the widely held perception that the Karzai government is corrupt and illegitimate, and that Afghans, primarily ethnic Pashtuns, want foreign occupation forces out. They're only fighting to make foreigners leave Afghanistan. Occupation fuels insurgency. That is an ironclad fact.

I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this resolution, of which I'm proud to be an original cosponsor, and I'd like to thank Representative KUCINICH for his work on this resolution and also mainly for his continued and passioned defense of congressional war powers authority. Also, I, too, want to commend Congressman JONES for his leadership on this issue and so many other issues.

This resolution is simple and straightforward. It directs the President to end the near decade-long war in Afghanistan and to redeploy United States Armed Forces from Afghanistan by the end of this year. Al Qaeda is not in Afghanistan, and Osama bin Laden still has not been found. This resolution comes at a time when a growing number of Members of Congress, military and foreign policy experts, and, in particular, the American people, are calling for an immediate end to this war. Enough is enough.

Let me just say something. First of all, we've heard that polls are showing that nearly three-quarters of the American public favors action to speed up U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. Yes, the Congress authorized the use of force in 2001, which I voted against because it gave the President, any President, a blank check to use force, anytime, anyplace, anywhere in the world for any period of time. It was not a declaration of war, yet this has been the longest war in American history, the longest war in American history.

As the daughter of a 25-year Army officer who served in two wars, let me salute our troops, let me honor our troops and just say our servicemen and -women have performed with incredible courage and commitment in Afghanistan. But they have been put in an impossible situation. It's time to bring them home. There is no military solution in Afghanistan.

As we fight here in Congress to protect investments in education, health care, public health and safety, the war in Afghanistan will cost more than $100 billion in 2011 alone.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. KUCINICH. I yield the gentlewoman an additional 30 seconds.

Ms. LEE. No one can deny that the increasing costs of the war in Afghanistan are constraining our efforts to invest in job creation and jump-start the economy.

Yesterday, I joined a bipartisan group of 80 Members of Congress in sending a letter to President Obama calling for a significant and sizeable reduction in United States troop levels in Afghanistan no later than July of this year.

This debate that we're having today here should have occurred in 2001 when Congress authorized this blank check. It was barely debated. It was barely debated, and the rush to war has created not less anger towards the United States but more hostilities, and it's not in our national security nor economic interests to continue.

Mr. KUCINICH. I want to point out that for those Members who are concerned about the finances of this government, U.S. debt soared from $6.4 trillion in March 2003 to $10 trillion.

Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Prize winner economist, and his associate, Linda Bilmes, pointed out that at least a quarter of that increase is directly attributable to the war in Iraq. As a result of two costly wars, funded by debt, our fiscal house was in abysmal shape even before the financial crisis, and those fiscal woes compounded the downturn. The global financial crisis was due at least in part—this is a quote—to the war.

□ 1220

Now they continue. The Iraq war didn't just contribute to the severity of the fiscal crisis, though it kept us from responding to it effectively. So, my friends, finance is a national security issue. If we are broke, we can't defend ourselves.

I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH).

Mr. WELCH. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues on the other side, America does have a national security interest in protecting American citizens from terrorist attack. But the question before us is this: Is that national security interest being served by 10 years of nation building in the third most corrupt country in the entire world? Is our national security interest being served by sending 100,000 troops and $454 billion in taxpayer money to a country where there are 50 members of al Qaeda? Is it a winning and likely successful strategy when al Qaeda simply moves where we aren't? They move out of Afghanistan into Pakistan, to Sudan, to wherever they can find a safe haven.

Does it make sense to ask our soldiers and our taxpayers to sacrifice when our Afghan partner is so profoundly corrupt? And I mean world-class corrupt: $3 billion in pallets of cash moved out of the Kabul airport to safe havens for warlords; an Afghan Vice President who flies to Dubai with $52 million in walking-around money; when the U.S.-backed Afghan major crimes unit tries to get Karzai to act on corruption and Karzai gets his buddy out of jail. Yes, we have a national security interest in protecting America from attack, but this is a losing strategy.

Mr. KUCINICH. I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ).

(Ms. VELÁZQUEZ asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution.

After 10 long years, $336 billion spent, 1,500 American lives lost, and thousands maimed, it is time to bring our troops home. Our servicemen and -women and their coalition allies have performed valiantly. The United States has done everything possible to provide opportunity for the Afghanistan people and the chance for a democratic government there to mature and take hold. Afghanistan must now take responsibility for its own destiny.

The fact of the matter is this: If now is not the time to leave, then when? Afghanistan has become the longest war in U.S. history, with a price tag of $100 billion a year. At a time when we are contemplating cutting services for seniors, educational programs for children, and tuition assistance for working college students, that money could be spent more wisely elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, too much of our country's treasure has gone toward this war. But more importantly, the cost in human life, American and Afghan, has been enormous. As the world's greatest democracy, what kind of message does this war send to other nations? Do as we say, not as we do?

It is time to make our actions reflect our words. Get out of Afghanistan now.

Mr. KUCINICH. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BERMAN. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, at the present time, I would like to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL).

(Mr. PAUL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAUL. I thank the gentleman.

The question we are facing today is, should we leave Afghanistan? I think the answer is very clear, and it's not complicated. Of course we should, as soon as we can. This suggests that we can leave by the end of the year. If we don't, we'll be there for another decade, would be my prediction.

The American people are now with us. A group of us here in the Congress, a bipartisan group, for nearly a decade have been talking about this, arguing not to expand the war, not to be over there, not to be in nation building. And the American people didn't pay much attention. Now they are. The large majority of the American people now say it's time to get out of Afghanistan. It's a fruitless venture. Too much has been lost. The chance of winning, since we don't even know what we are going to win, doesn't exist. So they are tired of it. Financially, there's a good reason to come home as well.

Some argue we have to be there because if we leave under these circumstances we'll lose face; it will look embarrassing to leave. So how many more men and women have to die, how many more dollars have to be spent to save face? That is one of the worst arguments possible.

We are not there under legal conditions. This is a war. Who says it isn't a war? Everybody talks about the Afghan war. Was the war declared? Of course not. It wasn't declared. There was a resolution passed that said that the President at that time, under the emergency of 9/11, could go and deal with al Qaeda, those who brought upon the 9/11 bombings. But al Qaeda is not there anymore. So we are fighting the Taliban.

The Taliban used to be our allies at one time when the Soviets were there. The Taliban's main goal is to keep the foreign occupation out. They want foreigners out of their country. They are not al Qaeda. Yet most Americans—maybe less so now. But the argument here on the floor is we have got to go after al Qaeda. This is not a war against al Qaeda. If anything, it gives the incentive for al Qaeda to grow in numbers rather than dealing with them.

The money issue, we are talking about a lot of money. How much do we spend a year? Probably about $130 billion, up to $1 trillion now in this past decade.

Later on in the day, we are going to have two votes. We are going to have a vote on doing something sensible, making sense out of our foreign policy, bringing our troops home and saving hundreds of billions of dollars. Then we also will have a vote against NPR, to cut the funding of NPR. There is a serious question about whether that will even cut one penny. But at least the fiscal conservatives are going to be overwhelmingly in support of slashing NPR, and then go home and brag about how they are such great fiscal conservatives. And the very most they might save is $10 million, and that's their claim to fame for slashing the budget. At the same time, they won't consider for a minute cutting a real significant amount of money.

All empires end for fiscal reasons because they spread themselves too far around the world, and that's what we are facing. We are in the midst of a military conflict that is contributing to this inevitable crisis and it's financial. And you would think there would be a message there.

How did the Soviets come down? By doing the very same thing that we're doing: perpetual occupation of a country.

We don't need to be occupying Afghanistan or any other country. We don't even need to be considering going into Libya or anywhere else. Fortunately, I guess for those of us who would like to see less of this killing, we will have to quit because we won't be able to afford it.

The process that we are going through is following the War Powers Resolution. This is a proper procedure. It calls attention to how we slip into these wars.

I have always claimed that it's the way we get into the wars that is the problem. If we would be precise and only go to war with a declaration of war, with the people behind us, knowing who the enemy is, and fight, win, and get it over with, that would be more legitimate. They don't do it now because the American people wouldn't support it. Nobody is going to declare war against Afghanistan or Iraq or Libya.

We now have been so careless for the past 50 or 60 years that, as a Congress and especially as a House, we have reneged on our responsibilities. We have avoided our prerogatives of saying that we have the control. We have control of the purse. We have control of when we are supposed to go to war. Yet the wars continue. They never stop. And we are going to be completely brought down to our knees.

We can't change Afghanistan. The people who are bragging about these changes, even if you could, you are not supposed to. You don't have the moral authority. You don't have the constitutional authority.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. JONES. I yield the gentleman 30 additional seconds.

Mr. PAUL. So I would say, the sooner, the better, we can come home. This process says come home. Under the law, it says you should start bringing troops home within 30 days. This allows up to the end of the year after

this would be passed. But this needs to be done. A message needs to be sent. And some day we have to wake up and say, if you are a fiscal conservative, you ought to look at the waste.

□ 1230

This is military Keynesianism to believe that we should do this forever. So I would say this is the day to be on record and vote for this resolution.

Mr. JONES. I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am so honored to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), a member of the Armed Services Committee and a distinguished combat veteran who has served our country honorably in Iraq and Afghanistan with the United States Marine Corps.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, first, I was in the Marine Corps. I did two tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. I didn't do anything exceptional; but if anybody else has served in Afghanistan, I will yield to you right now. If anybody in this Congress who has served in a military capacity in these wars in Afghanistan, I'll be happy to yield to you.

You might have taken a few trips over, and you can tell stories about the families that are impacted who you know. You can talk about people who you know that have been impacted. You can talk about those marines and soldiers and sailors and airmen that we see injured at Bethesda and Walter Reed; but if you want to quote somebody, you can quote me. I'm in 223 Cannon.

If you want to talk to a family that's been impacted by three deployments, two of my kids, all of them 10 or under—I have three—two of them have been through three deployments. One child, my youngest daughter, has been through one deployment, the Afghan deployment in 2007.

If you want to talk to somebody, feel free to talk to my family because they understand what it's like. What they also understand is the reason that we're there.

Less than 2 percent of America's population serves. The burden from Afghanistan is on their shoulders. It's on my family's shoulders. They know what's at stake. That's why they basically allowed me to do it. They allowed me to go to Iraq and Afghanistan because of the number one reason that we're there, the number one reason. And it's not to nation-build. It's to make sure that radicalized Muslims stop killing Americans. It's to stop them from destroying this country.

They want to murder us. Every single person in this room, every American, radicalized Muslims want to murder. That's why we have men and women over there right now fighting. That's it. There's no other reason for it.

Nation building is a thing we have to do there on the side to get the people, the Afghan people, on our side. But what we're doing right now is we're taking out the enemy.

And we have to trust General Petraeus. We have to trust President Obama, in this case, that they know what's going on. He's the Commander in Chief, not us. We are not the commanders in chief. There's one of them, and it's the other side's President.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. HUNTER. If you want to quote somebody who's been there, feel free to quote me. If you want to talk about it, feel free to come to my office. And if you want to hold up pictures of families, hold up pictures of mine because they've been impacted by it.

But I thank the gentleman from Ohio for bringing up this debate because what has happened is our side has cut defense by $16 billion in H.R. 1. If we're not going to support our troops while we're fighting, this type of resolution might need a look at later. I don't think now is the right time.

I oppose the resolution.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCCLINTOCK). All Members are reminded that remarks in debate should be addressed to the Chair and through the Chair and not to each other.

Mr. KUCINICH. I would like to insert into the RECORD a recent report from The Washington Post that says that we've seen the steepest increase in lost limbs among soldiers and marines occurring in the last 4 months.

[From the Washington Post, Mar. 9, 2011]

REPORT REVEALS STEEP INCREASE IN WAR AMPUTATIONS LAST FALL

(By David Brown)

The majority of American soldiers undergoing amputation for war wounds last fall lost more than one limb, according to data presented Tuesday to the Defense Health Board, a committee of experts that advises the Defense Department on medical matters.

Military officials had previously released data showing that amputations, and especially multiple-limb losses, increased last year. The information presented to the 20–member board is the first evidence that the steepest increase occurred over the last four months of the year.

In September 2010, about two-thirds of all war-theater amputation operations involved a single limb (usually a leg) and one-third two or more limbs. The split was roughly 50–50 in October and November. In December, only one-quarter of amputation surgery involved only one limb; three-quarters involved the loss of two or more limbs.

The Marines, who make up 20 percent of the forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, were especially hard hit. Of the 66 wounded severely enough to be evacuated overseas in October, one-third lost a limb.

In the first seven years of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, about 6 percent of seriously wounded soldiers underwent amputation.

Wounds to the genitals and lower urinary tract—known as genitourinary injuries—accounted for 11 percent of wounds over the last seven months of 2010, up from 4 percent in the previous 17 months, according to data presented by John B. Holcomb, a trauma surgeon and retired Army colonel.

The constellation of leg-and-genital wounds are in large part the consequence of stepping on improvised explosive devices—homemade mines—and are known as ''dismounted IED injuries.''

The data were assembled by Holcomb and two physicians at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, where all seriously injured soldiers are taken on their way back to the United States.

The steep increase in both the rate and number of amputations clearly disturbed both Holcomb and members of the board, which met at a Hilton hotel near Dulles International Airport.

Holcomb, who spent two weeks at Landstuhl in December and is a former head of the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research, said he had heard of ''unwritten pacts among young Marines that if they get their legs and genitals blown off they won't put tourniquets on but will let each other die on the battlefield.''

Richard H. Carmona, who was U.S. surgeon general from 2002 to 2006 and is now on the board, said the information was ''very disturbing.''

He said it has made him ask: ''What is the endgame here? Is the sacrifice we are asking of our young men and women worth the potential return? I have questions about that now.''

Carmona, 61, served as an Army medic in Vietnam before going to college and medical school. He has a son who is an Army sergeant and is serving in Iraq.

Jay A. Johannigman, an Air Force colonel who has served multiple deployments as a trauma surgeon, said his stint at the military hospital at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan last fall ''was different'' both personally and medically.

''We see the enormous price our young men and women are paying. It should not be for naught,'' he said. He didn't want to elaborate.

Why amputation-requiring injuries increased so much in recent months isn't entirely understood. It is partly a function of tactics that emphasize more foot patrols in rural areas. Some people have speculated the mines may be constructed specifically to cause the devastating wounds.

''Do the Marines know? Probably,'' said Frank Butler, a doctor and retired Navy captain who has spearheaded improvements in battlefield first aid over the last decade. ''But they're not releasing a thing. And they shouldn't.''

I would also like to insert into the RECORD a report from the ''American Conservative'' which says that late last year IED deaths among our own soldiers were up, not down.

[From The American Conservative, Mar. 10, 2011]

HOW'S THAT POPULATION-CENTRIC COIN GOING?

(Posted by Kelley Vlahos)

If the success or failure of the Afghan military ''surge'' rests on whether the U.S. can bring down the level of violence and protect the civilian population from the Taliban—a metric that the now fading COINdinistas had once insisted could be achieved with the right strategy—then two new statistics to emerge this week don't bode well for the prospects of the nearly 2-year-old counter-insurgency operation in Afghanistan.

First, more of our soldiers today are coming home this year with amputations than in the previous year, according reports coming out of the Defense Health Board this week. According to The Washington Post, which was apparently the only mainstream news outlet to cover the board's meeting in Northern Virginia on Tuesday, the steepest increase in lost limbs among soldiers and Marines occurred in the last four months.

The Marines, who make up 20 percent of the forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, were especially hard hit. Of the 66 wounded severely enough to be evacuated overseas in October, one-third lost a limb.

In the first seven years of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, about 6 percent of seriously wounded soldiers underwent amputation.

Wounds to the genitals and lower urinary tract—known as genitourinary injuries—accounted for 11 percent of wounds over the last seven months of 2010, up from 4 percent in the previous 17 months, according to data presented by John B. Holcomb, a trauma surgeon and retired Army colonel.

The constellation of leg-and-genital wounds are in large part the consequence of stepping on improvised explosive devices—homemade mines—and are known as ''dismounted IED injuries.''

The data regarding the increased amputations were already reported in Friday's WaPo, but apparently the fact they spiked in the last few months only came out in the meeting. Who knows if that point would've ever seen the light of day if a reporter hadn't been there. A source close to the board told me that media rarely show up to cover the DHB, which is a pity, because its members, which include both civilian and retired military doctors and scientists, probably know more about the ''big picture'' regarding the health and welfare of our troops in the battlefield than anyone else and tend to talk candidly among themselves about conditions there.

The data was presented Tuesday by John B. Holcomb, a trauma surgeon and retired Army colonel. As a former head of the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research, he said he had heard of ''unwritten pacts among young Marines that if they get their legs and genitals blown off they won't put tourniquets on but will let each other die on the battlefield.''

New DHB member Richard Carmona, a former U.S. Surgeon General under Bush, apparently didn't get the memo about keeping his emotional responses in check. The Vietnam veteran called the new statistics ''very disturbing,'' and then asked, ''What is the endgame here? Is the sacrifice we are asking of our young men and women worth the potential return? I have questions about that now.''

He should definitely have questions, considering that Gen. David Petraeus, Lt. Gen. William ''svengali'' Caldwell and others have been all over the press in recent weeks talking about how promising it looks in Afghanistan the Taliban's ''halted momentum,'' and all that.

Meanwhile, the other big news today is that civilian deaths in Afghanistan are up, too.

According to a new U.N. report, civilian deaths as a result of war violence rose 15 percent from the year before in Afghanistan (some of the highest levels since the war began in 2001). More than two-thirds of those deaths—2,777—were caused by insurgents (up 28 percent) and 440 were caused by Afghan Army/NATO forces (down 25 percent*). While the Taliban is responsible for most civilian deaths, the U.S. has made ''protecting the population'' a major strategic goal for winning over the Afghan people, legitimizing the Karzai government and draining the Taliban of its authority. Instead, it's been publicly blamed and repudiated by Afghans for a number of civilian bombing deaths, the most recent being nine Afghan boys killed ''by accident'' in a U.S. air strike in Kunar province.

This week, President Karzai, rejected an apology from Petraeus for the killings, and later accepted another attempt at apology from Sec. Def. Bob Gates. It didn't help that Petraeus' apology came a week after he suggested that the young victims of another NATO attack in Kunar had gotten their burn marks not from the strike, but from their parents, who might have hurt the kids themselves in disciplinary actions. It didn't go over so well, especially since Afghan authorities say 65 people were killed, many of them women and children. NATO has now admitted that some civilians may have been hurt, but insists the operation had targeted insurgents.

Again, my mind goes back to the COINdinistas, many of whom remain delusional about the direction of the war, and others who might be furiously back-peddling or remolding themselves as we speak. In June 2009, Triage: The Next Twelve Months in Afghanistan and Pakistan, was published by the pro-COIN Center for a New American Security (CNAS). In it, fellow Andrew Exum, CNAS CEO Nathaniel Fick, David Kilcullen and Ahmed Humayun wrote this (emphasis mine):

''To be sure, violence will rise in Afghanistan over the next year—no matter what the United States and its allies do. What matters, though, is who is dying. And here a particular lesson may be directly imported from the U.S. experience in Iraq. In 2007, during the Baghdad security operations commonly referred to as ''the surge,'' U.S. casualties actually increased sharply. What U.S. planners were looking for, however, was not a drop in U.S. casualties—or even a drop in Iraqi security force casualties but a drop in Iraqi civilian casualties. In the same way, U.S. and allied operations in Afghanistan must be focused on protecting the population even at the expense of allied casualties.''.

Afghan civilian casualties, whether at the hands of the coalition, the Taliban, or the Afghan government, will be the most telling measure of progress.

Well, violence is up, and deaths among NATO and its allies are up. And so are civilian casualties.

Meanwhile, while the CNAS team said in June 2009 that NATO/Afghan soldier deaths were expected to rise, they also claimed that another metric of success would be an eventual flattening of IED (Improvised Explosive Devices) incidents.

Another indicator of cooperation (with local Afghans) is the number of roadside bombs (improvised explosive devices, or IEDs) that are found and cleared versus exploded. IED numbers have risen sharply in Afghanistan since 2006 (though numbers are still low, and IEDs still unsophisticated, compared to Iraq). The coalition should expect an increase in numbers again this year. However, a rise in the proportion of IEDs being found and defused (especially when discovered thanks to tips from the local population) indicates that locals have a good working relationship with local military units a sign of progress.

Despite all his spin to the contrary, Petraeus cannot hide the fact that late last year, IED deaths among our own soldiers were up, not down. A chart issued within its own November progress report to Congress last November shows that, and it shows that the found and cleared IEDs had not risen above the attacks in most areas of the country.

Plus, metric or no metric, the recent data indicating serious injuries of U.S. soldiers this late in the game—while every other assessment outside the military bubble says the Taliban are making more gains not less—should leave any thinking person at this point to question, ''is it really worth it?''

Not sure what it will take before the COINdinistas admit events on the ground are falling short of their own metrics. Sounds like a good follow-up to ''Triage,'' but will anyone there have the guts to write it?

I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Texas, Representative JACKSON LEE.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. I respect my President, our President.

I thank the previous speaker for his service. I thank all of the United States military, at home and abroad, for their brave and courageous service.

I beg to differ. The Constitution indicates that the Congress can declare war, which has not been so declared. I would make the argument that we have shed our blood in Afghanistan, and my hat is off to those families who have lost their loved ones, and certainly those who fight on the front lines today.

I believe it is important for Congress to be engaged in this effort because this is the people's House. A few months ago, a year ago, I may not have supported this move. But here we are again, facing the same obstacles.

This amendment or resolution says within 30 days, but up to December 31, if necessary.

It is time now to push the Kabul government to be able to negotiate and engage. It is time to use smart power. It is time to let girls go to school, let leaders lead, and for our combat troops and others to come home.

It is time to recognize that our resources are needed around the world. Libya is in need.

But it is time for us to end with Afghanistan and to push them to be a sovereign nation, and to work with them on diplomacy and to be able to save lives.

I support this resolution. I wish that it would pass now.

Mr. KUCINICH. I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS).

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to the longest running war in our Nation's history. I want to thank my friend and colleague from Ohio for introducing this resolution.

War is not the answer. It is not the way to peace. We must root out the causes of hate and violence.

Gandhi once said: ''Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment, and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from the fear of punishment.''

Our path to peace in Afghanistan is not through war; it is not through violence. Enough is enough. The time is long overdue.

We are spending billions of dollars a week. Not another nickel, not another dime, not another dollar, not another hour, not another day, not another week. We must end this war and end it now.

I urge all of my colleagues to support the resolution.

Mr. KUCINICH. I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. POLIS).

Mr. POLIS. I thank the gentleman from Ohio for bringing forth this important resolution and finally bringing to the floor of the House the discussion about the war in Afghanistan.

Wrong war, wrong time, wrong place. Intelligence estimates are that there are under 50 al Qaeda operatives in Afghanistan. With the current cost of the war effort, we're spending between $1.5 billion and $2 billion per al Qaeda operative.

There is a very real terrorist threat to our country that comes from the loosely knit al Qaeda terrorist network, but that threat does not emanate from Afghanistan. It does not emanate from any one particular nation-state. It is a stateless menace. They go wherever they're able to thrive on the lack of order.

To effectively combat this menace, we need targeted special operations, we need aggressive intelligence gathering, and we need to make sure that we combat this menace wherever they are with the appropriate resources.

Being bogged down, occupying one particular nation-state is a waste of resources and not the best way to keep the American people safe.

I strongly support this resolution.

□ 1240

Mr. KUCINICH. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BERMAN. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER).

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I rise in support of the resolution, and again with great respect and concern for those great people who we are sending overseas to defend us. If we don't think they can succeed, it is incumbent upon us to bring them home as soon as possible.

I was not in the United States military in Afghanistan, but I did participate in a battle in Afghanistan when the Russians were there. I went in with the Mujahideen unit and fought in the Battle of Jalalabad in 1988. I got to know these people of Afghanistan. Foreign troops will never conquer the people of Afghanistan.

And, yes, radicalized Islams did murder Americans on 9/11. By the way, most of them were Saudis. Most all of them who hijacked the planes were Saudis. And Saudi Arabia still has the radical Islamic tenets that we are talking about that supposedly brought us into this battle.

We will not succeed if we are planning to force the Afghan people to accept the centralized government that our State Department has foisted upon them. All we are going to do is lose more people. All we are going to do is have more wounded people and more of our military sent over there, because that is what they are telling us is the method of getting out. To get out, we have to have Karzai accepted.

We have foisted on them the most centralized system of government that would never have even worked here, because we believe that local people should run the police and should elect their own local officials. If we don't believe that that system will work, and that is our plan, we should get our people out of there before more of them are killed and maimed.

Yes, we do respect DUNCAN HUNTER and all those people who have served. That is the reason, that is what motivates me.

Here we have WALTER JONES, who represents the Marine Corps down at Camp Lejeune. If they thought that they were defending our country and were going to save our lives, all of them would give their lives for us. But they are not on that mission. They are on that mission to get the Afghan people and coerce them into accepting a corrupt central government, and that won't work. It didn't work when I was there fighting the Russians. It won't work now.

Mr. JONES. I continue to reserve my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the gentleman from California, I would not compare a staff delegation trip to the valiant forces of our armed services who are fighting overseas.

I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. COFFMAN), a member of the Armed Services Committee, a combat veteran of the first gulf war, who served again in Iraq 5 years ago with the United States Marine Corps.

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. I thank the gentlewoman from Florida, and I thank the gentleman from Ohio for bringing this resolution forward, and I reluctantly rise in opposition to it.

I volunteered to serve in Iraq not because I believed that invading, pacifying, and administering the country was the right course of action, but I believed that once we had made the commitment that we had to follow it through and bring it to a reasonable and just conclusion.

In Afghanistan, I think that what this Nation first did was great: That we were attacked on 9/11. The Taliban controlled much of the country and gave safe harbor to al Qaeda, and we gave air, logistical, and advisory support to the anti-Taliban forces in the country and they pushed the Taliban out.

We made a wrong turn after that, by forcing the victors on the ground aside instead of using our leverage to have them reach out to the Pashtun elements of the country, and we superimposed a political process on them that doesn't fit the political culture of the country, a government that is mired in corruption and has little capacity to govern outside of Kabul. I believe it is wrong to use conventional forces against an irregular force that make our military vulnerable to asymmetric capability. But we have security interests in Afghanistan that we must accept.

We need to make sure that the Taliban doesn't take over the country where it becomes a permissive environment, where they can use that to destabilize Afghanistan, to assist the Taliban on the other side of the Durand Line. We need some base of operations in Afghanistan to be able to strike al Qaeda targets in the federally administered tribal areas of Afghanistan. I believe that we can do it with a lighter footprint. I think we ought to be focused on supporting factions within this region that share our strategic interests.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. I thank the gentlewoman from Florida.

We have strategic interests in Afghanistan. It would be wrong, it would be irresponsible at this time to expeditiously withdraw all of our forces from Afghanistan, again, without recognizing our strategic interests there.

Although I differ on the strategy that we are using right now, I recognize the security interests of the United States that are vital for us to maintain not only peace and stability in the region but also at home.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY), a member of the Armed Services, Intelligence, Agriculture, and Ethics Committees.

Mr. CONAWAY. I thank the gentlewoman.

We have to get this right. I rise in opposition to this motion. I use that phrase, it comes from David Petraeus' testimony in the last 2 days in front of the House Armed Services Committee.

He tells a poignant story about a black day in Iraq when he was commander of the 101st in which two helicopters collided midair and 17 troops were killed. Really, one of his darkest days. And in the emotions of all of that and the trauma and the fight to move forward, a young PFC came up to this two-star general, which is pretty odd, and he said: General, I know of 17 reasons why we have to get this right.

That analogy can be spread across all of the lives lost, all of the grievous injuries that we have suffered in this war over the last 10 years in Afghanistan. We have to get this right. And this emotion that they have brought forward is not remotely going to get it right. Whatever your position is, this is not the right thing to do. We should not do this.

These conversations have consequences. They are heard around the world. And while the other side, the folks who will vote for this, the folks who brought this forward have a right to do this and, in their mind, perhaps an obligation to do this, to have this conversation, these conversations affect the men and women in the fight. And for us to stand here over and over to tell them that they cannot win, that they cannot make this happen, is irresponsible on our part.

David Petraeus is the man who knows more about what is going on on

the ground in Afghanistan today than anybody walking the face of the Earth. And, Mr. Speaker, in all deference to the fellows who served 20 years ago there in whatever capacity, that was 20 years ago. Today, David Petraeus says the strategy is correct. We have got the inputs correct. We are moving forward, and we can make the circumstances to get the end results that we want in which the Afghan people are in charge of Afghanistan and responsible for Afghanistan security.

This resolution is incorrect. It will not get it right, and I strongly urge a ''no'' vote on this resolution.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas, Judge POE, vice chair of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation.

Mr. POE of Texas. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

War is expensive; and it should not be measured in the cost of money, which has been, really, the discussion today. I have the greatest respect for Mr. JONES and Mr. ROHRABACHER and you, too, Mr. KUCINICH, but this is an important issue before us.

Today, as we are here in the House of Representatives, Mark Wells is being buried. He was killed on March 5, representing us in Afghanistan. He had been to Iraq. And, yes, he is of Irish heritage, so his family decided, ''We want to have his service on St. Patrick's Day.''

I talked to his father, Burl, earlier this week. And Burl is proud of his son's service, and he is proud of America's service in Afghanistan. And Burl told me, he said: ''Congressman POE, it is my fear that there are dark days ahead for America because we may not choose to persevere.''

And what I believe he meant by that was that his son and others who have died for this country, died for that concept of freedom, people that live after them, our soldiers that are over there, and we who make decisions, may not persevere and finish this war.

War is hard. It is expensive. And America never quits, and America should never quit in this war.

Our enemies in Iraq and Afghanistan have always had the policy and philosophy: America will get weary. Americans will quit. They don't have the stomach for it.

□ 1250

We need to send a message to them and the rest of the world and to our troops that are on the front lines in Afghanistan today that we support them and we will not get weary, we will not quit, we will not give in or give up just because this war has been long and hard.

And that's just the way it is.

Mr. KUCINICH. I would like to put into the RECORD an article from the National Interest which states that many U.S. and western troops cannot leave their bases without encountering IEDs or more coordinated attacks from insurgents.

[From The National Interest, Mar. 9, 2011]

PULLING A FAST ONE IN AFGHANISTAN

(By Christopher A. Preble)

I have just returned from a discussion of U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan hosted by the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. The meeting of 25 or so journalists, think tankers, and current and former government officials featured introductory remarks by Gilles Dorronsoro, visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment, and FDD's Bill Roggio. FDD President, Cliff May, moderated the session. The meeting was officially on the record, but I'm relying solely on my hand-written notes, so I won't quote the other attendees directly.

I would characterize the general mood as grim. A few attendees pointed to the killing of a number of Taliban figures in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, and reports of progress in Marja and the rest of Helmand province as evidence of progress. These gains, one speaker maintained, were sustainable and would not necessarily slip in the event that U.S. forces are directed where elsewhere.

Dorronsoro disputed these assertions. He judged that the situation today is worse than it was a year ago, before the surge of 30,000 additional troops. The killing of individual Taliban leaders, or foot-soldiers, was also accompanied by the inadvertent killing of innocent bystanders, including most recent nine children. So there is always the danger that even targeted strikes based on timely, credible intelligence, will over the long term replace one dead Talib with two or four or eight of his sons, brothers, cousins, and tribesman. How many people have said ''We can't kill our way to victory''?

For Dorronsoro, the crucial metric is security, no number of bad guys and suspected bad guys killed. And, given that he can't drive to places that he freely visited two or three years ago, he judges that security in the country has gotten worse, not better. Many U.S. and Western troops cannot leave their bases without encountering IEDs or more coordinated attacks from insurgents. U.S. and NATO forces don't control territory, and there is little reason to think that they can. Effective counterinsurgencies (COIN) are waged by a credible local partner, a government that commands the respect and authority of its citizens. That obviously doesn't exist in Afghanistan. The Afghan militia, supposedly the key to long-term success, is completely ineffective.

Secretary Gates asserted on Monday that the draw down of U.S. troops would begin as scheduled this July, although, as the Washington Post's Greg Jaffe writes, ''he cautioned that any reductions in U.S. forces would likely be small and that a significant U.S. force will remain in combat for the rest of 2011.'' NATO remains committed to 2014 as the date to hand over security to the Afghan government. Whether the United States retains a long-term presence in the country is the subject of much speculation.

For the people from FDD, it shouldn't be. Roggio stressed that the problem with U.S. strategy is that Americans were looking for an exit, when we should be making a long-term commitment to Afghanistan. May concurred. When I asked them to clarify how long term, both demurred (Roggio said ''a decade or more'' but didn't elaborate). I also inquired about the resources that would be required to constitute ''commitment''. Given that we have over 100,000 troops on the ground, and that we will spend over $100 billion in Afghanistan in this year alone, how much more of a commitment would they find acceptable? Again, no definitive answer.

Roggio did claim, however, that a long-term commitment would increase the prospect of turning the Pakistanis. This is the crucial other piece in the puzzle. Nearly everyone in the meeting agreed that the unwillingness of the Pakistanis to cooperate with the United States had allowed a safe haven to be created in North Waziristan and elsewhere along the AfPak border. Most in the meeting admitted that Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan did not always align with our own. None had an answer for decisively changing this calculus, but some agreed with Roggio that evidence of progress in Afghanistan—combined with a credible commitment on the part of the U.S. to remain for the long-haul—would convince the Pakistanis to side with the Americans.

If you're reading carefully, you can see a circular logic here, brilliantly encapsulated by Dorronsoro. I paraphrase: We cannot win Afghanistan without turning Pakistan, but we cannot turn the Pakistanis without warning in Afghanistan. It is no wonder that one attendee declared herself growing increasingly depressed as the meeting wore on.

I would like to insert into the RECORD an article from Cato-at-Liberty's Web site entitled America's Aimless Absurdity in Afghanistan.

AMERICA'S 'AIMLESS ABSURDITY' IN AFGHANISTAN

(Posted By Malou Innocent On March 7, 2011)

Rasmussen reports that 52% of Americans want U.S. troops home from Afghanistan within a year, up from 43% last fall. Of course, polls are ephemeral snapshots of public opinion that can fluctuate with the prevailing political winds; nonetheless, it does appear that more Americans are slowly coming to realize the ''aimless absurdity'' of our nation-building project in Central Asia.

Earlier today, former Republican senator Judd Gregg of New Hampshire said on MSNBC's ''Morning Joe'': ''I don't think we can afford Afghanistan much longer.'' He continued: ''The simple fact is that it's costing us. Good people are losing their lives there, and we're losing huge amounts of resources there. . . . So I think we should have a timeframe for getting out of Afghanistan, and it should be shorter rather than longer.''

Gregg is absolutely right. It is well past time to bring this long war to a swift end. Yet Gregg's comments also reflect a growing bipartisan realization that prolonging our land war in Asia is weakening our country militarily and economically.

To politicians of any stripe, the costs on paper of staying in Afghanistan are jarring. Pentagon officials told the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee that it costs an average of $400 per gallon of fuel for the aircraft and combat vehicles operating in land-locked Afghanistan. The U.S. Agency for International Development has spent more than $7.8 billion on Afghanistan reconstruction since 2001, including building and refurbishing 680 schools and training thousands of civil servants. Walter Pincus, of The Washington Post, reported that the Army Corps of Engineers spent $4 billion last year on 720 miles of roads to transport troops in and around the war-ravaged country. It will spend another $4 to $6 billion this year, for 250 more miles.

War should no longer be a left-right issue. It's a question of scarce resources and limiting the power of government. Opposition to the war in Afghanistan can no longer be swept under the carpet or dismissed as an issue owned by peaceniks and pacifists, especially when our men and women in uniform are being deployed to prop up a regime Washington doesn't trust, for goals our president can't define.

I would like to put into the RECORD an article from Truthdig posted on

AlterNet entitled Afghanistan: Obscenely Well-Funded but Largely Unsuccessful War Rages on Out of Sight of the American Public.

[From AlterNet, Nov. 18, 2010]

AFGHANISTAN: OBSCENELY WELL-FUNDED, BUT LARGELY UNSUCCESSFUL WAR RAGES ON OUT OF SIGHT OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC

(By Juan Cole)

Not only is it unclear that the U.S. and NATO are winning their war in Afghanistan, the lack of support for their effort by the Afghanistan president himself has driven the American commander to the brink of resignation. In response to complaints from his constituents, Afghanistan's mercurial President Hamid Karzai called Sunday for American troops to scale back their military operations. The supposed ally of the U.S., who only last spring petulantly threatened to join the Taliban, astonished Washington with this new outburst, which prompted a warning from Gen. David Petraeus that the president was making Petraeus' position ''untenable,'' which some speculated might be a threat to resign.

During the past two months, the U.S. military has fought a major campaign in the environs of the southern Pashtun city of Kandahar, launching night raids and attempting to push insurgents out of the orchards and farms to the east of the metropolis. Many local farmers were displaced, losing their crops in the midst of the violence, and forced to become day laborers in the slums of Kandahar. Presumably these Pashtun clans who found themselves in the crossfire between the Taliban and the U.S. put pressure on Karzai to call a halt to the operation.

That there has been heavy fighting in Afghanistan this fall would come as a surprise to most Americans, who have seen little news on their televisions about the war. Various websites noted that 10 NATO troops were killed this past Saturday and Sunday alone, five of them in a single battle, but it was hardly front page news, and got little or no television coverage.

The midterm campaign circus took the focus off of foreign affairs in favor of witches in Newark and eyes of Newt in Georgia. Distant Kandahar was reduced to an invisible battle in an unseen war, largely unreported in America's mass media, as though it were irrelevant to the big campaign issues—of deficits and spending, of taxes and public welfare. Since it was President Obama's offensive, Democrats could not run against it. Since it is billed as key to U.S. security, Republicans were not interested in running against it. Kandahar, city of pomegranates and car bombs, of poppies and government cartels, lacked a partisan implication, and so no one spoke of it.

In fact, the war is costing on the order of $7 billion a month, a sum that is still being borrowed and adding nearly $100 billion a year to the already-burgeoning national debt. Yet in all the talk in all the campaigns in the hustings about the dangers of the federal budget deficit, hardly any candidates fingered the war as economically unsustainable.

The American public cannot have a debate on the war if it is not even mentioned in public. The extreme invisibility of the Afghanistan war is apparent from a Lexis Nexis search I did for ''Kandahar'' (again, the site of a major military campaign) for the period from Oct. 15 to Nov. 15. I got only a few dozen hits, from all American news sources (National Public Radio was among the few media outlets that devoted substantial airtime to the campaign).

The campaign in the outskirts of Kandahar had been modeled on last winter's attack on the farming area of Marjah in Helmand Province. Marjah was a demonstration project, intended to show that the U.S., NATO and Afghanistan security forces could ''take, clear, hold and build.''

Petraeus' counterinsurgency doctrine depends on taking territory away from the insurgents, clearing it of guerrillas, holding it for the medium term to keep the Taliban from returning and to reassure local leaders that they need not fear reprisals for ''collaborating,'' and then building up services and security for the long term to ensure that the insurgents can never again return and dominate the area. But all these months later, the insurgents still have not been cleared from Marjah, which is a site of frequent gun fights between over-stretched Marines and Taliban.

There is no early prospect of Afghan army troops holding the area, or of building effective institutions in the face of constant sniping and bombing. Marjah is only 18 square miles. Afghanistan is more than 251,000 square miles. If Marjah is the model for the campaign in the outskirts of Kandahar, then the latter will be a long, hard slog. Kandahar is even more complicated, since the labyrinthine alleyways of the city and its hundreds of thousands of inhabitants offer insurgents new sorts of cover when they are displaced there from the countryside.

Counterinsurgency requires an Afghan partner, but all along the spectrum of Afghan institutions, the U.S. and NATO are seeking in vain for the ''government in a box'' once promised by Gen. Stanley McChrystal. The people in the key provinces of Helmand and Kandahar are largely hostile to U.S. and NATO troops, seeing them as disrespecting their traditions and as offering no protection from violence. They see cooperating with the U.S. as collaboration and want Mullah Omar of the Taliban to join the government.

Although the U.S. and NATO have spent $27 billion on training Afghan troops, only 12 percent of them can operate independently. Karzai and his circle are extremely corrupt, taking millions in cash payments from Iran and looting a major bank for unsecured loans, allowing the purchase of opulent villas in fashionable Dubai. It is no wonder that Petraeus is at the end of his rope. The only question is why the Obama administration is not, and how long it will hold to the myth of counterinsurgency.

I would like to put into the RECORD an article published on AlterNet titled Totally Occupied: 700 Military Bases Spread Across Afghanistan, by Nick Turse at TomDispatch.com.

[From AlterNet, Posted on February 10, 2010, Printed on March 17, 2011]

TOTALLY OCCUPIED: 700 MILITARY BASES SPREAD ACROSS AFGHANISTAN

(By Nick Turse, Tomdispatch.com)

In the nineteenth century, it was a fort used by British forces. In the twentieth century, Soviet troops moved into the crumbling facilities. In December 2009, at this site in the Shinwar district of Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province, U.S. troops joined members of the Afghan National Army in preparing the way for the next round of foreign occupation. On its grounds, a new military base is expected to rise, one of hundreds of camps and outposts scattered across the country.

Nearly a decade after the Bush administration launched its invasion of Afghanistan, TomDispatch offers the first actual count of American, NATO, and other coalition bases there, as well as facilities used by the Afghan security forces. Such bases range from relatively small sites like Shinwar to mega-bases that resemble small American towns. Today, according to official sources, approximately 700 bases of every size dot the Afghan countryside, and more, like the one in Shinwar, are under construction or soon will be as part of a base-building boom that began last year.

Existing in the shadows, rarely reported on and little talked about, this base-building program is nonetheless staggering in size and scope, and heavily dependent on supplies imported from abroad, which means that it is also extraordinarily expensive. It has added significantly to the already long secret list of Pentagon property overseas and raises questions about just how long, after the planned beginning of a drawdown of American forces in 2011, the U.S. will still be garrisoning Afghanistan.

400 FOREIGN BASES IN AFGHANISTAN

Colonel Wayne Shanks, a spokesman for the U.S.-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), tells TomDispatch that there are, at present, nearly 400 U.S. and coalition bases in Afghanistan, including camps, forward operating bases, and combat outposts. In addition, there are at least 300 Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) bases, most of them built, maintained, or supported by the U.S. A small number of the coalition sites are mega-bases like Kandahar Airfield, which boasts one of the busiest runways in the world, and Bagram Air Base, a former Soviet facility that received a makeover, complete with Burger King and Popeyes outlets, and now serves more than 20,000 U.S. troops, in addition to thousands of coalition forces and civilian contractors.

In fact, Kandahar, which housed 9,000 coalition troops as recently as 2007, is expected to have a population of as many as 35,000 troops by the time President Obama's surge is complete, according to Colonel Kevin Wilson who oversees building efforts in the southern half of Afghanistan for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. On the other hand, the Shinwar site, according to Sgt. Tracy J. Smith of the U.S. 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, will be a small forward operating base (FOB) that will host both Afghan troops and foreign forces.

Last fall, it was reported that more than $200 million in construction projects—from barracks to cargo storage facilities—were planned for or in-progress at Bagram. Substantial construction funds have also been set aside by the U.S. Air Force to upgrade its air power capacity at Kandahar. For example, $65 million has been allocated to build additional apron space (where aircraft can be parked, serviced, and loaded or unloaded) to accommodate more close-air support for soldiers in the field and a greater intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability. Another $61 million has also been earmarked for the construction of a cargo helicopter apron and a tactical airlift apron there.

Kandahar is just one of many sites currently being upgraded. Exact figures on the number of facilities being enlarged, improved, or hardened are unavailable but, according a spokesman for ISAF, the military plans to expand several more bases to accommodate the increase of troops as part of Afghan War commander Stanley McChrystal's surge strategy. In addition, at least 12 more bases are slated to be built to help handle

the 30,000 extra American troops and thousands of NATO forces beginning to arrive in the country.

''Currently we have over $3 billion worth of work going on in Afghanistan,'' says Colonel Wilson, ''and probably by the summer, when the dust settles from all the uplift, we'll have about $1.3 billion to $1.4 billion worth of that [in the South].'' By comparison, between 2002 and 2008, the Army Corps of Engineers spent more than $4.5 billion on construction projects, most of it base-building, in Afghanistan.

At the site of the future FOB in Shinwar, more than 135 private construction contractors attended what was termed an ''Afghan-Coalition contractors rodeo.'' According to Lieutenant Fernando Roach, a contracting officer with the U.S. Army's Task Force Mountain Warrior, the event was designed ''to give potential contractors a walkthrough of the area so they'll have a solid overview of the scope of work.'' The construction firms then bid on three separate projects: the renovation of the more than 30-year old Soviet facilities, the building of new living quarters for Afghan and coalition forces, and the construction of a two-kilometer wall for the base.

In the weeks since the ''rodeo,'' the U.S. Army has announced additional plans to upgrade facilities at other forward operating bases. At FOB Airborne, located near Kane-Ezzat in Wardak Province, for instance, the Army intends to put in reinforced concrete bunkers and blast protection barriers as well as lay concrete foundations for Re-Locatable Buildings (prefabricated, trailer-like structures used for living and working quarters). Similar work is also scheduled for FOB Altimur, an Army camp in Logar Province.

THE AFGHAN BASE BOOM

Recently, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Afghanistan District-Kabul, announced that it would be seeking bids on ''site assessments'' for Afghan National Security Forces District Headquarters Facilities nationwide. The precise number of Afghan bases scattered throughout the country is unclear.

When asked by TomDispatch, Colonel Radmanish of the Afghan Ministry of Defense would state only that major bases were located in Kabul, Pakteya, Kandahar, Herat, and Mazar-e-Sharif, and that ANA units operate all across Afghanistan. Recent U.S. Army contracts for maintenance services provided to Afghan army and police bases, however, suggest that there are no fewer than 300 such facilities that are, according to an ISAF spokesman, not counted among the coalition base inventory.

As opposed to America's fast-food-franchise-filled bases, Afghan ones are often decidedly more rustic affairs. The police headquarters in Khost Farang District, Baghlan Province, is a good example. According to a detailed site assessment conducted by a local contractor for the Army Corps of Engineers and the Afghan government, the district headquarters consists of mud and stone buildings surrounded by a mud wall. The site even lacks a deep well for water. A trench fed by a nearby spring is the only convenient water source.

The U.S. bases that most resemble austere Afghan facilities are combat outposts, also known as COPs. Environmental Specialist Michael Bell of the Army Corps of Engineers, Afghanistan Engineer District-South's Real Estate Division, recently described the facilities and life on such a base as he and his co-worker, Realty Specialist Damian Salazar, saw it in late 2009:

''COP Sangar . . . is a compound surrounded by mud and straw walls. Tents with cots supplied the sleeping quarters . . . A medical, pharmacy and command post tent occupied the center of the COP, complete with a few computers with internet access and three primitive operating tables. Showers had just been installed with hot [water] . . . only available from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. . . .

''An MWR [Morale, Welfare and Recreation] tent was erected on Thanksgiving Day with an operating television; however, the tent was rarely used due to the cold. Most of the troops used a tent with gym equipment for recreation . . . A cook trailer provided a hot simple breakfast and supper. Lunch was MREs [meals ready to eat]. Nights were pitch black with no outside lighting from the base or the city.''

WHAT MAKES A BASE?

According to an official site assessment, future construction at the Khost Farang District police headquarters will make use of sand, gravel, and stone, all available on the spot. Additionally, cement, steel, bricks, lime, and gypsum have been located for purchase in Pol-e Khomri City, about 85 miles away.

Constructing a base for American troops, however, is another matter. For the far less modest American needs of American troops, builders rely heavily on goods imported over extremely long, difficult to traverse, and sometimes embattled supply lines, all of which adds up to an extraordinarily costly affair. ''Our business runs on materials,'' Lieutenant General Robert Van Antwerp, commander of the Army Corps of Engineers, told an audience at a town hall meeting in Afghanistan in December 2009. ''You have to bring in the lumber, you have to bring in the steel, you have to bring in the containers and all that. Transport isn't easy in this country—number one, the roads themselves, number two, coming through other countries to get here—there are just huge challenges in getting the materials here.''

To facilitate U.S. base construction projects, a new ''virtual storefront''—an online shopping portal—has been launched by the Pentagon's Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). The Maintenance, Repair and Operations Uzbekistan Virtual Storefront website and a defense contractor-owned and operated brick-and-mortar warehouse facility that supports it aim to provide regionally-produced construction materials to speed surge-accelerated building efforts.

From a facility located in Termez, Uzbekistan, cement, concrete, fencing, roofing, rope, sand, steel, gutters, pipe, and other construction material manufactured in countries like Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan can be rushed to nearby Afghanistan to accelerate base-building efforts. ''Having the products closer to the fight will make it easier for warfighters by reducing logistics response and delivery time,'' says Chet Evanitsky, the DLA's construction and equipment supply chain division chief.

AMERICA'S SHADOWY BASE WORLD

The Pentagon's most recent inventory of bases lists a total of 716 overseas sites. These include facilities owned and leased all across the Middle East as well as a significant presence in Europe and Asia, especially Japan and South Korea. Perhaps even more notable than the Pentagon's impressive public foreign property portfolio are the many sites left off the official inventory. While bases in the Persian Gulf countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates are all listed, one conspicuously absent site is Al-Udeid Air Base, a billion-dollar facility in nearby Qatar, where the U.S. Air Force secretly oversees its on-going unmanned drone wars.

The count also does not include any sites in Iraq where, as of August 2009, there were still nearly 300 American bases and outposts. Similarly, U.S. bases in Afghanistan—a significant percentage of the 400 foreign sites scattered across the country—are noticeably absent from the Pentagon inventory.

Counting the remaining bases in Iraq—as many as 50 are slated to be operating after President Barack Obama's August 31, 2010, deadline to remove all U.S. ''combat troops'' from the country—and those in Afghanistan, as well as black sites like Al-Udeid, the total number of U.S. bases overseas now must significantly exceed 1,000. Just exactly how many U.S. military bases (and allied facilities used by U.S. forces) are scattered across the globe may never be publicly known. What we do know—from the experience of bases in Germany, Italy, Japan, and South Korea—is that, once built, they have a tendency toward permanency that a cessation of hostilities, or even outright peace, has a way of not altering.

After nearly a decade of war, close to 700 U.S., allied, and Afghan military bases dot Afghanistan. Until now, however, they have existed as black sites known to few Americans outside the Pentagon. It remains to be seen, a decade into the future, how many of these sites will still be occupied by U.S. and allied troops and whose flag will be planted on the ever-shifting British-Soviet-U.S./Afghan site at Shinwar.

General Petraeus and others in the administration continue their PR campaign. Overwhelming evidence is proving their upbeat assessments of our strategy is false. A recent article by the Los Angeles Times cited a report released by the Foreign Affairs Committee and the British Parliament that concluded that ''despite the optimistic appraisals we heard from some military and official sources, the security situation across Afghanistan as a whole is deteriorating. Counterinsurgency efforts in the south and east have allowed the Taliban to expand its presence and control in other previously relatively stable areas in Afghanistan.''

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New York, Mr. CHARLES RANGEL.

(Mr. RANGEL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RANGEL. This afternoon sometime, I will reintroduce my bill calling for a mandatory draft, making certain that every young person has an opportunity one way or the other to serve this great nation of ours, whether we're talking about in our schools, our hospitals, or just to provide some public service.

But the main part of this bill is that the President, when he asked us to declare war, or however we get involved in these things with loss of lives, we're going to have these people that come to the well and explain how we have to get involved, we have to fight, we can't give up, to see whether or not if their kids and grandchildren were mandated that they would have to go into these areas and put themselves in harm's way, how soon it will be before we take another look at this.

Let me congratulate the gentleman from Ohio for allowing our priests, our rabbis, our ministers to recognize that

we're talking about human lives being lost because of our concern about oil in this part of the world. It hasn't got a darn thing to do with our national security. I just hope and pray that one day we would be able to say we know we made a mistake and withdraw from this type of thing now and for the future of this great country.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Mr. BERMAN. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT), the chairman of the Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces.

(Mr. BARTLETT asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTLETT. Thank you very much for yielding.

If our only reason for being in Afghanistan was to deny sanctuary to al Qaeda, I probably would have asked time from the gentleman from Ohio and be speaking from the other side, because when we are successful in Afghanistan, that will not have denied sanctuary to al Qaeda because they will simply go over into Pakistan. If not there, they'll go to Yemen and Somalia. If we leave Afghanistan now or if we leave Afghanistan before victory in Afghanistan, we will have sent a message to the world that their suspicions are really true, that all you have to do to the United States is make it tough for them and they will pull out. We did it in Beirut. We did it in Somalia. It is absolutely essential that we win here, or our credibility is gone forever as a major player in geopolitical things in the world.

A second good reason for staying in Afghanistan is that if we can have a fledgling democracy there, that will send a very powerful message to the Middle East from which most of the world's oil comes. There is a lot of upheaval there, and a stable democracy in Afghanistan would be enormously important.

Beyond denying sanctuary to al Qaeda, there are very good reasons for staying in Afghanistan until we have victory. Our young people there are doing an incredible job. I just came from there a bit over a week ago. We can succeed there, and I think we must succeed for the two reasons I mentioned.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. GIBSON), a member of the Armed Services Committee and a decorated combat veteran who ended his 24-year military career as a colonel in the United States Army.

Mr. GIBSON. I thank the lady.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the resolution. I served in Iraq when it was hard and unpopular, and I thank God that I live in a country that had the intestinal fortitude to see it through.

This year, we're going to complete our objectives in Iraq, and the remaining 48,000 troops that are there are going to come home. There's going to be a small contingent, about 150 or so, that are going to move underneath the Embassy, but we will have completed our objectives and Iraq will be stable and friendly.

Now, Afghanistan is different from Iraq, but our approach should be similar. The surge has accomplished its primary aim, to seize the initiative from the Taliban. But now we need to finish the job of building out the institution, the security and the civil institutions.

I'm recently back from Afghanistan, and I had an opportunity to meet the leadership there. I feel confident we've got the right plan going forward. And I support the President's plan, the President's plan to begin withdrawal this year and to complete combat operations by 2014, because I believe this plan will stabilize Afghanistan and help protect our cherished way of life, preventing al Qaeda from regaining sanctuary.

Now going forward, I think we need to learn from these experiences. Some comments were made here earlier about us, whether or not we're a Republic or an empire. I share those concerns and those sentiments. We're a Republic, and we need to learn from these experiences. But we need to see this through. We need to stand with our Commander in Chief. We need to stand with our troops. Complete this task.

And then finally let me say that I join all today on both sides of the aisle who honor our service men and women who have fell in the line of battle. We pray for their souls. We pray for their families. We remember those wounded in battle, those who bear physical scars. Those who bear no physical scars who are emotionally scarred, we pray for them. We honor them.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. GIBSON. And let me say this: That going forward, that this body, whether it be this issue or any issue, that this body and that this country shall be worthy of the sacrifices of our service men and women.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. PALAZZO), a member of the Armed Services Committee and a Marine veteran of the first gulf war who continues to serve with the Army National Guard.

Mr. PALAZZO. Mr. Speaker, the resolution proposed by my colleague from Ohio does a disservice to the men and women who have courageously defended our country from our enemies in Afghanistan. This past weekend I had the distinct pleasure and honor of welcoming home the 287th Engineering Company, commonly referred to as Sappers, based in Lucedale, Mississippi. They have the most dangerous mission in Afghanistan. They were the ones that cleared routes so that our men and women in uniform could have safe passage. They're the ones that rooted out the IEDs and the roadside bombs. And I'm happy to say they came back 100 percent, with one wounded warrior, but they did their mission.

While they were obviously overjoyed to see their loved ones again, the soldiers I spoke with were good to go with that mission and what they had accomplished. They fully understand that there are those who want to indiscriminately kill and maim Americans and we would rather take the fight to them overseas and abroad instead of having them come to our backyard, to our schools and our playgrounds.

□ 1300

Just yesterday, I had the chance to speak personally with General Petraeus after his testimony before the House Armed Services Committee. Again, as a Marine veteran of the Persian Gulf war and currently serving in the Mississippi National Guard, I know firsthand what good military commands look like, and General Petraeus is a great leader, a professional soldier, and someone whose opinion I respect very much.

Based on this resolution, his quote was, ''The Taliban and al Qaeda obviously would trumpet this as a victory, as a success. Needless to say, it would completely undermine everything that our troopers have fought and sacrificed so much for.''

Mr. Speaker, Congress' constitutional responsibility is to ensure that the courageous men and women in our armed services have the tools and equipment and training to do their job and come home safely to their family. Our warfighters don't need armchair generals in this Congress arbitrarily dictating terms that will cause irreparable harm to them and to the national security of this country.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this resolution.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire how much time is remaining for each individual.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) has 5¾ minutes remaining; the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) has 3½ minutes remaining; the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) has 9½ minutes remaining; and the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) has 5 minutes remaining.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

Mr. Speaker, spending on the Afghanistan war is rising at an accelerating rate. Over just 3 years, in a period of 3 years—2010, 2011, and 2012—we will spend 45 percent more on the war in Afghanistan than we did in the preceding

8 years, $336.9 billion versus $231.2 billion. This is an example of out-of-control Federal spending.

If Congress is serious about being fiscally responsible and about cutting the Federal budget by three figures, then cutting spending on the out-of-control $100 billion-a-year war in Afghanistan must be a serious consideration. This legislation, House Concurrent Resolution 28, gives those who are concerned about the costs of this war an opportunity finally to have a choice.

I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Who seeks recognition?

The Chair will recognize Members for closing speeches in the reverse order of opening. That is, the gentleman from North Carolina, the gentleman from California, the gentleman from Ohio, and finally the gentlewoman from Florida.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state it.

Mr. KUCINICH. Is it the province of the Chair to determine that closing statements are in order?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Recognition is in the discretion of the Chair.

Mr. KUCINICH. Further parliamentary inquiry. Does the Chair have the right to determine that closing statements are the order of business here?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. It is the custom of the House for the Chair to recognize Members in the reverse order of their opening statements to make their closing statements.

Mr. KUCINICH. Further parliamentary inquiry. Does the Chair have the ability to direct individual Members that they are to give their closing statements?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. A Member may yield his last amount of time to another Member at his discretion.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. JONES. I yield myself 3 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say to every Member that has been on the floor that served in our military, thank you and God bless you, as I say all the time to those who are overseas for this country.

Because I did not serve, I sought out a Marine general that every Marine that spoke on the floor today, if I said his name—but I don't have permission—they would salute him. They know him.

Let me share with you what this Marine general said to me back in November when I told him I read an article in The New York Times that an Army colonel was saying, Oh, the training of Afghans is going so well. So I emailed him. This is a six-point response, and I am going to read three very quickly:

''Continued belief that we can train the Afghan army to be effective in the time we have is nonsense. The vast majority cannot even read. They are people from the villages hooked on drugs, illiterate, and undisciplined. The South Vietnamese soldiers were much better trained, and they could not stem the tide.''

He further states, ''What is the end state we are looking to achieve? What are the measures of effectiveness? What is our exit strategy? Same old questions, no answers.''

He closed by saying this: ''What do we say to the mother and father, the wife, of the last Marine killed to support a corrupt government and a corrupt leader in a war that cannot be won?''

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, if I could ask my good friend the gentleman from California if he would yield 2 minutes of his time to me.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask unanimous consent to yield 2 minutes of my remaining time to my chairman, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Florida may control that time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, how much would I have, then, to close?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Florida has 5½ minutes remaining.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Who seeks recognition?

Seeing none, we will proceed with the closing statements in the reverse order of the opening statements.

First, the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from North Carolina has 3½ minutes remaining.

Mr. JONES. I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

Mr. KUCINICH. The 2001 authorization of military force and the justification for our continued military presence in Afghanistan is that the Taliban in the past provided a safe haven for al Qaeda or could do so again in the future. General Petraeus has already admitted that al Qaeda has little or no presence in Afghanistan. Al Qaeda is an international organization, and, yes, they are a threat to America. The Taliban is only a threat to us as long as we continue our military occupation in Afghanistan.

After more than 9 years of military occupation of Afghanistan, can we really continue to claim to be acting in self-defense? The premise that the presence of our troops on the ground keeps us safer at home has been repudiated by recent terrorist attacks on the United States, all done by people other than Afghans outraged at continuing U.S. military occupation of predominantly Muslim countries. That is not to justify what they do, but it is to clarify the condition that we have in Afghanistan.

For how long are we going to continue to dedicate hundreds of billions of dollars and thousands of lives before we realize we can't win Afghanistan militarily?

At the end of the year, the administration and U.S. military leaders were touting peace talks to end the war with high-level Taliban leaders. These Taliban leaders turned out to be fake.

A November 2010 article in The New York Times detailed joint U.S. and Afghan negotiations with Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansour, a man the U.S. claimed was one of the most senior commanders in the Taliban. According to the New York Times, ''the episode underscores the uncertain and even bizarre nature of the atmosphere in which Afghan and American leaders search for ways to bring the American-led war to an end. The leaders of the Taliban are believed to be hiding in Pakistan, possibly with assistance of the Pakistani government, which receives billions of dollars in U.S. aid.''

How can we claim that a cornerstone of our counterinsurgency strategy is to take out Taliban strongholds across the country while at the same time conducting negotiations with the Taliban in an effort to end the war?

This episode further underlies the significant weakness in our strategy. We think we can separate the Taliban from the rest the Afghan population. Our counterinsurgency strategy fails to recognize a basic principle: Occupations fuel insurgencies. Occupations fuel insurgencies. Occupations fuel insurgencies.

The Taliban is a local resistance movement that is part and parcel of the indigenous population.

□ 1310

We lost the Vietnam war because we failed to win the hearts and minds of the local population. Without providing them with a competent government that provided them with basic security and a decent living, we're committing the same mistake in Afghanistan.

News reports indicate the Taliban is regaining momentum. The increase in civilian casualties due to higher levels of violence by insurgents further undermines the assurances of progress. As we send more troops into the country and kill innocent civilians with errant air strikes, the Taliban gains more support as resistors of foreign occupation. If we accept the premise that we can never leave Afghanistan until the Taliban is eradicated, we'll be there forever.

I would like to insert into the RECORD an article from The Nation, ''America's Failed War in Afghanistan—No Policy Change Is Going to Affect the Outcome.'' That's by Jeremy Scahill.

[From The Nation, Mar. 17, 2011]

AMERICA'S FAILED WAR IN AFGHANISTAN—NO POLICY CHANGE IS GOING TO AFFECT THE OUTCOME

(By Jeremy Scahill)

At the end of the NATO summit in Lisbon, Portugal this weekend, the leadership of the Afghan Taliban issued a statement characterizing the alliance's adoption of a loose timeline for a 2014 end to combat operations as ''good news'' for Afghans and ''a sign of failure for the American government.'' At the summit, President Barack Obama said that 2011 will begin ''a transition to full Afghan lead'' in security operations, while the Taliban declared: ''In the past nine years, the invaders could not establish any system of governance in Kabul and they will never be able to do so in future.''

While Obama claimed that the U.S. and its allies are ''breaking the Taliban's momentum,'' the reality on the ground tells a different story. Despite increased Special Operations Forces raids and, under Gen. David Petraeus, a return to regular U.S.-led airstrikes, the insurgency in Afghanistan is spreading and growing stronger. ''By killing Taliban leaders the war will not come to an end,'' said the Taliban's former foreign minister, Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil, in an interview at his home in Kabul. ''On the contrary, things get worse which will give birth to more leaders.''

Former and current Taliban leaders say that they have seen a swelling in the Taliban ranks since 9–11. In part, they say, this can be attributed to a widely held perception that the Karzai government is corrupt and illegitimate and that Afghans—primarily ethnic Pashtuns—want foreign occupation forces out. ''We are only fighting to make foreigners leave Afghanistan,'' a new Taliban commander in Kunduz told me during my recent trip to the country. ''We don't want to fight after the withdrawal of foreigners, but as long as there are foreigners, we won't talk to Karzai.''

''The Americans have very sophisticated technology, but the problem here in Afghanistan is they are confronting ideology. I think ideology is stronger than technology,'' says Abdul Salam Zaeef, a former senior member of Mullah Mohammed Omar's government. ''If I am a Taliban and I'm killed, I'm martyred, then I'm successful. There are no regrets for the Taliban. It's very difficult to defeat this kind of idea.''

But it is not simply a matter of ideology versus technology. The Taliban is not one unified body. The Afghan insurgency is fueled by fighters with a wide variety of motivations. Some are the dedicated jihadists of which Zaeef speaks, but others are fighting to defend their land or are seeking revenge for the killing of family members by NATO or Afghan forces. While al Qaeda has been almost entirely expelled from Afghanistan, the insurgency still counts a small number of non-Afghans among its ranks. Bolstering the Taliban's recruitment efforts is the perception in Afghanistan that the Taliban pays better than NATO or the Afghan army or police.

The hard reality U.S. officials don't want to discuss is this: the cultural and religious values of much of the Pashtun population—which comprises 25–40 percent of the country—more closely align with those of the Taliban than they do with Afghan government or U.S./NATO forces. The Taliban operate a shadow government in large swaths of the Pashtun areas of the country, complete with governors and a court system. In rural areas, land and property disputes are resolved through the Taliban system rather than the Afghan government, which is widely distrusted. ''The objectives and goal of the American troops in Afghanistan are not clear to the people and therefore Afghans call the Americans 'invaders,'" says Muttawakil. ''Democracy is a very new phenomenon in Afghanistan and most people don't know the meaning of democracy. And now corruption, thieves and fakes have defamed democracy. Democracy can't be imposed because people will never adopt any value by force.''

The U.S. strategy of attempting to force the Taliban to surrender or engage in negotiations rests almost exclusively on attempts to decapitate the Taliban leadership. While Taliban leaders acknowledge that commanders are regularly killed, they say the targeted killings are producing more radical leaders who are far less likely to negotiate than the older school Taliban leaders who served in the government of Mullah Mohammed Omar. ''If today Mullah Omar was captured or killed, the fighting will go on,'' says Zaeef, adding: ''It will be worse for everyone if the [current] Taliban leadership disappears.''

In October, there were a flurry of media reports that senior Taliban leaders were negotiating with the Karzai government and that U.S. forces were helping to insure safe passage for the Taliban leaders to come to Kabul. The Taliban passionately refuted those reports, saying they were propaganda aimed at dividing the insurgency. Last week the Taliban appeared vindicated on this point as Karzai spoke in markedly modest terms on the issue. He told The Washington Post that three months ago he had met with one or two ''very high'' level Taliban leaders. He characterized the meeting as ''the exchange of desires for peace,'' saying the Taliban ''feel the same as we do here—that too many people are suffering for no reason.''

Update: [On Tuesday, The New York Times reported that NATO and the Afghan government have held a series of ''secret'' peace negotiations with a man who posed as a senior Taliban leader, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansour. A Western diplomat involved in the discussions told the Times, ''[W]e gave him a lot of money.'' It is unclear who, if anyone, the impostor was working for, though the Times speculated that he could have been deployed by Pakistan's ISI spy agency or by the Taliban itself. ''The Taliban are cleverer than the Americans and our own intelligence service,'' said a senior Afghan official who is familiar with the case. ''They are playing games.'' Last month, the White House asked the Times to withhold Mansour's name ''from an article about the peace talks, expressing concern that the talks would be jeopardized—and Mr. Mansour's life put at risk—if his involvement were publicized. The Times agreed to withhold Mr. Mansour's name,'' according to the paper.

This incident is significant on a number of levels. If true, it underscores the ineffective and inaccurate nature of U.S., NATO and Afghan government intelligence. It also confirms what Taliban leaders have stated publicly and to The Nation, namely that it has not negotiated with the Afghan government or NATO and that it will not negotiate unless foreign troops leave Afghanistan. The fake Mullah Mansour, according to the Times, ''did not demand, as the Taliban have in the past, a withdrawal of foreign forces or a Taliban share of the government.''

In October, a U.S. official said that reports in U.S. media outlets of senior Taliban negotiating are propaganda aimed at sowing dissent among the Taliban leadership. ''This is a psychological operation, plain and simple,'' the official with firsthand knowledge of the Afghan government's strategies told the McClatchy news service. ''Exaggerating the significance of it is an effort to sow distrust within the insurgency.''

Today on MSNBC, Pentagon spokesperson Geoff Morrell continued to insist that U.S. and NATO forces have facilitated safe passage for Taliban leaders for reconciliation meetings in Kabul. The Taliban maintain there have been no meetings.

The Taliban impostor incident also calls into question scores of deadly night raids that have resulted in the deaths of innocent Afghans. Several survivors of night raids recently told The Nation that they believed they were victims of bad intelligence provided by other Afghans for money or to settle personal grudges.

Contrary to the rhetoric emanating from NATO and Washington, the Taliban are not on the ropes and, from their perspective, would gain nothing from negotiating with the U.S. or NATO. As far as they are concerned, time is on their side. ''The bottom line for [NATO and the U.S.] is to immediately implement what they would ultimately have to implement . . . after colossal casualties,'' stated the Taliban declaration after the recent NATO summit. ''They should not postpone withdrawal of their forces.''

Depending on who you ask, the fact that Gen. Petraeus has brought back the use of heavy U.S. airstrikes and is increasing night raids and other direct actions by Special Operations Forces could be seen as a sign of either fierce determination to wipe out ''the enemy'' or of desperation to prove the U.S. and its allies are ''winning.'' Over the past three months, NATO claims that Special Operations Forces' night raids have resulted in more than 360 ''insurgent leaders'' being killed or captured along with 960 ''lower-level'' leaders and the capture of more than 2400 ''lower-level'' fighters. In July, Special Operations Forces averaged 5 raids a night. Now, according to NATO, they are conducting an average of 17. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called the raids ''intelligence-driven precision operations against high value insurgents and their networks,'' adding, ''There is no question that they are having a significant impact on the insurgent leadership.''

The raids undoubtedly have produced scores of successful kill or capture operations, but serious questions abound over the NATO definitions of Taliban commanders, sub-commanders and foot soldiers. Most significantly, the raids consistently result in the killing of innocent civilians, a fact that is problematic for NATO and the Karzai government. ''A lot of times, yeah, the right guys would get targeted and the right guys would get killed,'' says Matthew Hoh a former senior State Department official in Afghanistan who resigned in 2009 in protest of U.S. war strategy. ''Plenty of other times, the wrong people would get killed.

Sometimes it would be innocent families.'' Hoh, who was the senior U.S. civilian in Zabul province, a Taliban stronghold, describes night raids as ''a really risky, really violent operation,'' saying that when Special Operations Forces conduct them, ''We might get that one guy we're looking for or we might kill a bunch of innocent people and now make ten more Taliban out of them.''

Hoh describes the current use of U.S. Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan as a ''tremendous waste of resources,'' saying, ''They are the best strike forces the world's ever known. They're very well trained, very well equipped, have a tremendous amount of support, and we've got them in Afghanistan chasing after mid-level Taliban leaders who are not threatening the United States, who are only fighting us really because we're in their valley.''

In an interview with The Washington Post in mid-November, President Karzai called for an end to the night raids. ''I don't like it in

any manner and the Afghan people don't like these raids in any manner,'' Karzai said. ''We don't like raids in our homes. This is a problem between us and I hope this ends as soon as possible. . . . Terrorism is not invading Afghan homes and fighting terrorism is not being intrusive in the daily Afghan life.''

Karzai's comments angered the Obama administration. At the NATO summit, President Obama acknowledged that civilian deaths have sparked ''real tensions'' with the Karzai government, but reserved the right to continue US raids. ''[Karzai's] got to understand that I've got a bunch of young men and women . . . who are in a foreign country being shot at and having to traverse terrain filled with IEDs, and they need to protect themselves,'' Obama said. ''So if we're setting things up where they're just sitting ducks for the Taliban, that's not an acceptable answer either.'' Republican Senator Lindsey Graham blasted Karzai's statement calling for an end to night raids, saying, ''it would be a disaster for the Petraeus strategy.''

Along with Afghan government corruption, including a cabal of war lords, drug dealers and war criminals in key positions, the so-called Petraeus strategy of ratcheting up air strikes and expanding night raids is itself delivering substantial blows to the stated U.S. counterinsurgency strategy and the much-discussed battle for hearts and minds. The raids and airstrikes are premiere recruiting points for the Taliban and, unlike Sen. Graham and the Obama administration, Karzai seems to get that. In the bigger picture, the U.S. appears to be trying to kill its way to a passable definition of a success or even victory. This strategy puts a premium on the number of kills and captures of anyone who can loosely be defined as an insurgent and completely sidelines the blowback these operations cause. ''We found ourselves in this Special Operations form of attrition warfare,'' says Hoh, ''which is kind of like an oxymoron, because Special Operations are not supposed to be in attrition warfare. But we've found ourselves in that in Afghanistan''

I would like to put into the RECORD an article from Aljazeera.net, which points out that for all practical purposes, Washington has given up on its counterinsurgency strategy.

[From Aljazeera.net, Mar. 7, 2011]

FAILING IN AFGHANISTAN SUCCESSFULLY—DESPITE HUNDREDS OF BILLIONS OF DOLLARS AND THOUSANDS OF TROOPS, THE U.S. IS UNABLE TO CONCLUDE ITS LONGEST WAR

(By Marwan Bishara)

While we have been fixated on successive Arab breakthroughs and victories against tyranny and extremism, Washington is failing miserably but discreetly in Afghanistan.

The American media's one-obsession-at-a-time coverage of global affairs might have put the spotlight on President Obama's slow and poor reaction to the breathtaking developments starting in Tunisia and Egypt. But they spared him embarrassing questions about continued escalation and deaths in Afghanistan.

In spite of its international coalition, multiple strategies, hundreds of billions of dollars, and a surge of tens of thousands of troops, the U.S. is unable to conclude its longest war yet or at least reverse its trend.

Recent ''reports'' from the war front have been of two kinds. Some official or analytical in nature and heavily circulated in Washington portray a war going terribly well. On the other hand, hard news from the ground tell a story of U.S. fatigue, backtracking and tactical withdrawals or redeployments which do not bode well for defeating the Taliban or forcing them to the negotiations' table.

For example, while the U.S. military's decision to withdraw from the Pech valley was justified on tactical need to redeploy troops for the task of ''protecting the population'', keen observers saw it as a humiliating retreat from what the Pentagon previously called a very strategic position and sacrificed some hundred soldiers defending it.

Likewise, strategic analysts close to the administration speak triumphantly of U.S. surge and hi-tech firepower inflicting terrible cost on the Taliban, killing many insurgents and driving many more from their sanctuaries.

But news from the war front show the Taliban unrelenting, mounting counter-attacks and escalating the war especially in areas where the U.S. has ''surged'' its troops. And while the majority of the 400 Afghan districts are ''calmer'', they remain mostly out of Kabul's control.

What success?

Those with relatively long memories recall the then defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld's claims that most of Afghanistan was secure in early 2003 and that American forces had changed their strategy from major combat operations to stabilisation and reconstruction project.

But the Taliban continued to carry daily attacks on government buildings, U.S. positions and international organisations. Two years later, the U.S. was to suffer the worst and deadliest year since the war began.

Today's war pundits are in the same state of denial. For all practical purpose, Washington has given up on its counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy devised under McChrystal and Petreaus.

Instead, it is pursuing a heavy handed and terribly destructive crackdown that includes special operations, assassinations, mass demolitions, air and night raids etc. that have led to anything but winning the country, let alone its hearts and minds.

The killing of nine Afghan children last week—all under the age of 12—by U.S. attack helicopters has once again put the spotlight on the U.S. military's new aggressive methods.

The results are so devastating for the conduct of the war and to Washington's clients, that President Karzai not only distanced himself from the U.S. methods, but also publicly rejected Washington's apology for the killings.

Nor is the recruitment and training of the Afghan forces going well. Indeed, many seem to give up on the idea that Afghan security forces could take matters into their hands if the U.S. withdraws in the foreseeable future.

Worse, U.S. strategic co-operation with Pakistan—the central pillar of Obama's PakAf strategy—has cooled after the arrest of a CIA contractor for the killing of two Pakistanis even though he presumably enjoys diplomatic immunity.

Reportedly, it has also led to a ''breakdown'' in co-ordination between the two countries intelligence agencies, the CIA and the ISI.

But the incident is merely a symptom of a bigger problem between the two countries. A reluctant partner, the Pakistani establishment and its military are unhappy with U.S. strategy which they reckon could destabilise their country and strengthen Afghanistan and India at their expense.

That has not deterred Washington from offering ideas and money to repair the damage. However, it has become clear that unlike in recent years, future improvement in their bilateral relations will most probably come as a result of the U.S. edging closer to Pakistan's position, not the opposite.

All of which makes one wonder why certain Washington circles are rushing to advance the ''success story''.

Running out of options

The Afghan government's incapability to take on the tasks of governing or securing the country beyond the capital, and the incapacity of the Obama administration to break the Taliban's momentum does not bode well for an early conclusion of the war.

To their credit some of Obama's war and surge supporters realise that there is no military solution for Afghanistan. Clearly, their claims of battlefield successes help justify the rush to talk to the Taliban.

But it is not yet clear whether the presumably ongoing exploratory secret negotiations with the Taliban are serious at all, or will lead to comprehensive negotiations and eventually a lasting deal. The last ''Taliban commander'' Washington dialogued with in the fall turned out to be an impostor—a shopkeeper from Quetta!

If the Taliban does eventually accept to sit down with Obama or Karzai envoys, the U.S. needs to explain why it fought for 10 years only to help the group back to power.

Secretary of state Hillary Clinton has begun the humiliating backtracking last month: ''Now, I know that reconciling with an adversary that can be as brutal as the Taliban sounds distasteful, even unimaginable. And diplomacy would be easy if we only had to talk to our friends. But that is not how one makes peace.''

Facing up to the reality

The mere fact that the world's mightiest superpower cannot win over the poorly armed Taliban after a long decade of fighting, means it has already failed strategically, regardless of the final outcome.

The escalation of violence and wasting billions more cannot change that. It is history. The quicker the Obama administration recognises its misfortunes, minimises its losses and convenes a regional conference over the future of Afghanistan under UN auspices, the easier it will be to evacuate without humiliation.

Whether the U.S. eventually loses the war and declares victory; negotiates a settlement and withdraw its troops, remains to be seen. What is incontestable is that when you fight the week for too long, you also become weak.

All of which explains the rather blunt comments made in a speech at the end of February, by U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates when he said ''. . . any future defense secretary who advises the president to again send a big American land army into Asia or into the Middle East or Africa should 'have his head examined,' as General MacArthur so delicately put it.''

Amen.

I would like to insert into the RECORD, from AlterNet, an article by Derrick Crowe and Robert Greenwald posted on February 6, 2011, titled Damning New Report Shows U.S. Strategy is Blocking Chance for Peace in Afghanistan.

[From AlterNet, Feb. 6, 2011]

DAMNING NEW REPORT SHOWS U.S. STRATEGY IS BLOCKING CHANCE FOR PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN

(By Derrick Crowe and Robert Greenwald)

See: http://www.alternet.org/story/149815/

The new report from NYU's Center for International Cooperation is a damning description of the U.S. policies in Afghanistan since 2001, and a warning that the escalated military strategy blocks the road to peace while making the Taliban more dangerous.

Separating the Taliban from al-Qaeda: The Core of Success in Afghanistan is the latest

in a continuous string of statements from Afghanistan experts that the U.S. war policies that were launched a year ago aren't making us safer and aren't worth the substantial costs: $1 million per U.S. troop in Afghanistan per year, for a total of more than $375.5 billion wasted so far. The report is written by Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, Kandahar-based researchers who've spent more than four years researching the Taliban and the recent history of southern Afghanistan.

I would like to place into the RECORD an article from ABC News titled Afghan Security the Worst in a Decade, according to the U.N.

ABC NEWS—AFGHAN SECURITY THE WORST IN A DECADE: UN

The security situation in Afghanistan has worsened to its lowest point since the toppling of the Taliban a decade ago and attacks on aid workers are at unprecedented levels, a United Nations envoy said.

Robert Watkins, the outgoing UN deputy special representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan, says from a humanitarian perspective, security ''is on everyone's minds''.

''It is fair to say that security in the country is at its lowest point since the departure of the Talibans,'' he said.

Mr Watkins says before last year's surge in NATO military forces, the insurgency was centred in the south and south-east of the country.

''Since the surge of NATO forces last year, we have seen the insurgency move to parts of the country where we've never seen before,'' he said.

''We've now confronted with security problems that we'd never dream that we'd have.

''While NATO is claiming that it has turned the corner . . . we still see these very difficult security problems.''

UN relief agencies now have regular access to just 30 per cent of the country. Access is mixed for another 30 per cent while there is hardly any access to the remaining 40 per cent.

Mr Watkins says a key issue is the ''conflation of political, military, developmental and humanitarian aid''.

''Because of the way aid is dispersed in Afghanistan . . . it has contributed to perception in parts of the Afghan population that somehow humanitarian work is lumped into this political and military effort,'' he said.

''We have to emphasise that we recognise that there has to be separation and we have to be very careful to try to address this perception.''

But he pointed out that a positive development was that the international and Afghan military have publicly acknowledged that some kind of negotiated settlement was necessary to end the instability.

''[This year] can be a crucial year if there is a breakthrough in finding some kind of reconciliation efforts,'' he said.

The Taliban, a hardline Islamist movement, was forced from power in late 2001 after a US invasion launched in the wake of the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

I would like to place into the RECORD an article from The New York Times discussing the counterintelligence strategy titled U.S. Pulling Back in Afghan Valley it Called Vital to War.

[From The New York Times, Feb. 24, 2011]

U.S. PULLING BACK IN AFGHAN VALLEY IT CALLED VITAL TO WAR

(By C. J. Chivers, Alissa J. Rubin and Wesley Morgan)

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN.—After years of fighting for control of a prominent valley in the rugged mountains of eastern Afghanistan, the United States military has begun to pull back most of its forces from ground it once insisted was central to the campaign against the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

The withdrawal from the Pech Valley, a remote region in Kunar Province, formally began on Feb. 15. The military projects that it will last about two months, part of a shift of Western forces to the province's more populated areas. Afghan units will remain in the valley, a test of their military readiness.

While American officials say the withdrawal matches the latest counterinsurgency doctrine's emphasis on protecting Afghan civilians, Afghan officials worry that the shift of troops amounts to an abandonment of territory where multiple insurgent groups are well established, an area that Afghans fear they may not be ready to defend on their own.

And it is an emotional issue for American troops, who fear that their service and sacrifices could be squandered. At least 103 American soldiers have died in or near the valley's maze of steep gullies and soaring peaks, according to a count by The New York Times, and many times more have been wounded, often severely.

Military officials say they are sensitive to those perceptions. ''People say, 'You are coming out of the Pech'; I prefer to look at it as realigning to provide better security for the Afghan people,'' said Maj. Gen. John F. Campbell, the commander for eastern Afghanistan. ''I don't want the impression we're abandoning the Pech.''

The reorganization, which follows the complete Afghan and American withdrawals from isolated outposts in nearby Nuristan Province and the Korangal Valley, runs the risk of providing the Taliban with an opportunity to claim success and raises questions about the latest strategy guiding the war.

American officials say their logic is simple and compelling: the valley consumed resources disproportionate with its importance; those forces could be deployed in other areas; and there are not enough troops to win decisively in the Pech Valley in any case.

''If you continue to stay with the status quo, where will you be a year from now?'' General Campbell said. ''I would tell you that there are places where we'll continue to build up security and it leads to development and better governance, but there are some areas that are not ready for that, and I've got to use the forces where they can do the most good.''

President Obama's Afghan troop buildup is now fully in place, and the United States military has its largest-ever contingent in Afghanistan. Mr. Obama's reinforced campaign has switched focus to operations in Afghanistan's south, and to building up Afghan security forces.

The previous strategy emphasized denying sanctuaries to insurgents, blocking infiltration routes from Pakistan and trying to fight away from populated areas, where NATO's superior firepower could be massed, in theory, with less risk to civilians. The Pech Valley effort was once a cornerstone of this thinking.

The new plan stands as a clear, if unstated, repudiation of earlier decisions. When Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, the former NATO commander, overhauled the Afghan strategy two years ago, his staff designated 80 ''key terrain districts'' to concentrate on. The Pech Valley was not one of them.

Ultimately, the decision to withdraw reflected a stark—and controversial—internal assessment by the military that it would have been better served by not having entered the high valley in the first place.

''What we figured out is that people in the Pech really aren't anti-U.S. or anti-anything; they just want to be left alone,'' said one American military official familiar with the decision. ''Our presence is what's destabilizing this area.''

Gen. Mohammed Zaman Mamozai, a former commander of the region's Afghan Border Police, agreed with some of this assessment. He said that residents of the Pech Valley bristled at the American presence but might tolerate Afghan units. ''Many times they promised us that if we could tell the Americans to pull out of the area, they wouldn't fight the Afghan forces,'' he said.

It is impossible to know whether such pledges will hold. Some veterans worry that the withdrawal will create an ideal sanctuary for insurgent activity—an area under titular government influence where fighters or terrorists will shelter or prepare attacks elsewhere.

While it is possible that the insurgents will concentrate in the mountain valleys, General Campbell said his goal was to arrange forces to keep insurgents from Kabul, the country's capital.

''There are thousands of isolated mountainous valleys throughout Afghanistan, and we cannot be in all of them,'' he said.

The American military plans to withdraw from most of the four principal American positions in the valley. For security reasons, General Campbell declined to discuss which might retain an American presence, and exactly how the Americans would operate with Afghans in the area in the future.

As the pullback begins, the switch in thinking has fueled worries among those who say the United States is ceding some of Afghanistan's most difficult terrain to the insurgency and putting residents who have supported the government at risk of retaliation.

''There is no house in the area that does not have a government employee in it,'' said Col. Gul Rahman, the Afghan police chief in the Manogai District, where the Americans' largest base in the valley, Forward Operating Base Blessing, is located. ''Some work with the Afghan National Army, some work with the Afghan National Police, or they are a teacher or governmental employee. I think it is not wise to ignore and leave behind all these people, with the danger posed to their lives.''

Some Afghan military officials have also expressed pointed misgivings about the prospects for Afghan units left behind.

''According to my experience in the military and knowledge of the area, it's absolutely impractical for the Afghan National Army to protect the area without the Americans,'' said Major Turab, the former second-in-command of an Afghan battalion in the valley, who like many Afghans uses only one name. ''It will be a suicidal mission.''

The pullback has international implications as well. Senior Pakistani commanders have complained since last summer that as American troops withdraw from Kunar Province, fighters and some commanders from the Haqqani network and other militant groups have crossed into Afghanistan from Pakistan to create a ''reverse safe haven'' from which to carry out attacks against Pakistani troops in the tribal areas.

The Taliban and other Afghan insurgent groups are all but certain to label the withdrawal a victory in the Pech Valley, where they could point to the Soviet Army's withdrawal from the same area in 1988. Many Afghans remember that withdrawal as a symbolic moment when the Kremlin's military campaign began to visibly fall apart.

Within six months, the Soviet-backed Afghan Army of the time ceded the territory to mujahedeen groups, according to Afghan military officials.

The unease, both with the historical precedent and with the price paid in American

blood in the valley, has ignited a sometimes painful debate among Americans veterans and active-duty troops. The Pech Valley had long been a hub of American military operations in Kunar and Nuristan Provinces.

American forces first came to the valley in force in 2003, following the trail of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of the Hezb-i-Islami group, who, like other prominent insurgent leaders, has been said at different times to hide in Kunar. They did not find him, though Hezb-i-Islami is active in the valley.

Since then, one American infantry battalion after another has fought there, trying to establish security in villages while weathering roadside bombs and often vicious fights.

Along with other slotlike canyons that the United States has already largely abandoned—including the Korangal Valley, the Waygal Valley (where the battle of Wanat was fought in 2008), the Shuryak Valley and the Nuristan River corridor (where Combat Outpost Keating was nearly overrun in 2009)—the Pech Valley was a region rivaled only by Helmand Province as the deadliest Afghan acreage for American troops.

On one operation alone in 2005, 19 service members, including 11 members of the Navy Seals, died.

As the years passed and the toll rose, the area assumed for many soldiers a status as hallowed ground. ''I can think of very few places over the past 10 years with as high and as sustained a level of violence,'' said Col. James W. Bierman, who commanded a Marine battalion in the area in 2006 and helped establish the American presence in the Korangal Valley.

In the months after American units left the Korangal last year, insurgent attacks from that valley into the Pech Valley increased sharply, prompting the current American battalion in the area, First Battalion, 327th Infantry, and Special Operations units to carry out raids into places that American troops once patrolled regularly.

Last August, an infantry company raided the village of Omar, which the American military said had become a base for attacks into the Pech Valley, but which earlier units had viewed as mostly calm. Another American operation last November, in the nearby Watapor Valley, led to fighting that left seven American soldiers dead.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: February 24, 2011

An earlier version of this article referred incorrectly to a pullback of American forces in eastern Afghanistan. It is a pullback from remote territory within Kunar Province, not from the province as a whole.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) has 7½ minutes remaining.

Mr. BERMAN. I simply would very quickly make the case that the resolution should be voted against for several reasons. Initially, because it improperly invokes a provision of the War Powers Act that's inapplicable. This war was authorized by the U.S. Congress. Secondly, the manner in which it would force withdrawal is irresponsible and I don't think is the right way to do it. And, thirdly, that I am not prepared, from this point of view, to say that failure is in any way inevitable, and that we should not at this time make the judgment to pull the plug out from what we are doing in Afghanistan.

I would urge a ''no'' vote on the resolution.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) has 5¼ minutes remaining.

Mr. KUCINICH. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've stated over and over in this debate the cost of this war in this budget alone will be over $113 billion—$113 billion. There are Members who have come to this floor trying to whack a billion dollars in spending here and there. This is $113 billion. You want to cut out waste, let's get out of Afghanistan.

Keep in mind that when you go to the Pentagon, and some of our Members have, and have gone to Afghanistan, there's an open-ended war going on here. There's no end in sight. I've submitted for the RECORD articles with respect to that. Hear this: We're going to be there through at least 2020. And that's going to cost us an extra, at least an extra trillion dollars.

Where are we going to get that money? Are we going to cut Social Security for that? Are we going to cut health care and cut funds for education? Are we going to cut more funds for home heating aid?

Where are we going to get this money? Are we ready to give up our entire domestic agenda so that we can continue on the path of a war to prop up a corrupt regime whose friends are building villas in Dubai, presumably with money that comes through the United States that's shipped out in planes out of the Kabul airport?

We have to start standing up for America here.

I appreciate and respect every Member of this Congress who served in the military. We honor them, just as I honor the members of my own family; my father, Frank, who was a World War II veteran; my brother Frank, who was a Vietnam veteran; my brother Gary, a Vietnam-era veteran; my sister Beth Ann, an Army veteran. I come from a family that appreciates service to our country.

But how are we serving our troops by letting them in a situation that is absolutely impossible, whether it's greater numbers of them returning home with injuries from IEDs. How are we serving our troops by telling them we're going to keep extending the period of the war? Who's speaking up truly for our troops here? Is it General Petraeus, who says, Well, we'll just keep the war going and maybe—maybe—we'll send 2,000 troops out of Afghanistan or redirect them by 2014. He doesn't get to make the choice. That choice must be made by the Congress of the United States.

It's time that we started to stand up for the Constitution of the United States, which, last I checked, in Article I, section 8 provides that Congress has to make the decision whether or not to send our troops into war. We have not the right to give that over to a President, over to a general, or anybody else. It's our prerogative inside this Congress.

In 2001, Mr. Speaker, I joined with Members of this House in voting for the authorization of military force following the terrorist attacks on 9/11. I don't take a backseat to anyone in standing up to defend this country. But as the United States continues in what is now the longest war in our history, it has become clear that the authorization for military force is being used as a carte blanche for circumventing Congress' role as a coequal branch of government.

I want you to hear this. We're a coequal branch of government. We're not lap dogs for the President. We're not servants of generals. We are a coequal branch of government expressing the sovereign will of the American people.

It has become clear this administration, just as the last administration, is willing to commit us to an endless war and an endless stream of money, just a year after a commitment of an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan and continued assurances of ''progress.'' They have been walking that dog down the road for the last 7 years. Progress.

My legislation invokes the War Powers Resolution of 1973, and if enacted, would require this President to withdraw U.S. Armed Forces out of Afghanistan by December 31, 2011.

Regardless of your support or opposition to the war in Afghanistan, this debate has been a critical opportunity to evaluate the human and the economic cost as this Congress works to address our country's dire financial straits. Those of us that supported the withdrawal may not agree on a timeline, but an increasing number of us agree it's time to think and rethink our current national security strategy. And we have to know the costs are great. We can't get away from the costs of this war.

Nobel Prize-winning economist Joe Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, his associate, wrote a book about the Iraq war. They projected then a minimum of $3 trillion in costs.

I would like to include in the RECORD, Mr. Speaker, a statement that I made over 8 years ago at the beginning of the Iraq war, where I pointed out there was nothing—no reason why we should be going to war in Iraq because there was no proof that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

I mention that in terms of this debate because we're at the confluence of the events—the anniversary of the Iraq war; the confluence of the funding of the war in Afghanistan. We've got to get out of Afghanistan. We've got to get out of Iraq. We've got to start taking care of things here at home.

ANALYSIS OF JOINT RESOLUTION ON IRAQ BY DENNIS J. KUCINICH

WASHINGTON, Oct 2, 2002.—Whereas in 1990 in response to Iraq's war of aggression against and illegal occupation of Kuwait, the United States forged a coalition of nations to liberate Kuwait and its people in order to defend the national security of the United States and enforce United Nations Security Council resolutions relating to Iraq;

KEY ISSUE: In the Persian Gulf war there was an international coalition. World support was for protecting Kuwait. There is no world support for invading Iraq.

Whereas after the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, Iraq entered into a United Nations sponsored cease-fire agreement pursuant to which Iraq unequivocally agreed, among other things, to eliminate its nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons programs and the means to deliver and develop them, and to end its support for international terrorism;

Whereas the efforts of international weapons inspectors, United States intelligence agencies, and Iraqi defectors led to the discovery that Iraq had large stockpiles of chemical weapons and a large scale biological weapons program, and that Iraq had an advanced nuclear weapons development program that was much closer to producing a nuclear weapon than intelligence reporting had previously indicated;

KEY ISSUE: UN inspection teams identified and destroyed nearly all such weapons. A lead inspector, Scott Ritter, said that he believes that nearly all other weapons not found were destroyed in the Gulf War. Furthermore, according to a published report in the Washington Post, the Central Intelligence Agency has no up to date accurate report on Iraq's WMD capabilities.

Whereas Iraq, in direct and flagrant violation of the cease-fire, attempted to thwart the efforts of weapons inspectors to identify and destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction stockpiles and development capabilities, which finally resulted in the withdrawal of inspectors from Iraq on October 31, 1998;

KEY ISSUES: Iraqi deceptions always failed. The inspectors always figured out what Iraq was doing. It was the United States that withdrew from the inspections in 1998. And the United States then launched a cruise missile attack against Iraq 48 hours after the inspectors left. In advanced of a military strike, the US continues to thward (the Administration's word) weapons inspections.

Whereas in 1998 Congress concluded that Iraq's continuing weapons of mass destruction programs threatened vital United States interests and international peace and security, declared Iraq to be in ''material and unacceptable breach of its international obligations'' and urged the President ''to take appropriate action, in accordance with the Constitution and relevant laws of the United States, to bring Iraq into compliance with its international obligations'' (Public Law 105–235);

Whereas Iraq both poses a continuing threat to the national security of the United States and international peace and security in the Persian Gulf region and remains in material and unacceptable breach of its international obligations by, among other things, continuing to possess and develop a significant chemical and biological weapons capability, actively seeking a nuclear weapons capability, and supporting and harboring terrorist organizations;

KEY ISSUES: There is no proof that Iraq represents an imminent or immediate threat to the United States. A ''continuing'' threat does not constitute a sufficient cause for war. The Administration has refused to provide the Congress with credible intelligence that proves that Iraq is a serious threat to the United States and is continuing to possess and develop chemical and biological and nuclear weapons. Furthermore there is no credible intelligence connecting Iraq to Al Qaida and 9/11.

Whereas Iraq persists in violating resolutions of the United Nations Security Council by continuing to engage in brutal repression of its civilian population thereby threatening international peace and security in the region, by refusing to release, repatriate, or account for non-Iraqi citizens wrongfully detained by Iraq, including an American serviceman, and by failing to return property wrongfully seized by Iraq from Kuwait;

KEY ISSUE: This language is so broad that it would allow the President to order an attack against Iraq even when there is no material threat to the United States. Since this resolution authorizes the use of force for all Iraq related violations of the UN Security Council directives, and since the resolution cites Iraq's imprisonment of non-Iraqi prisoners, this resolution would authorize the President to attack Iraq in order to liberate Kuwaiti citizens who may or may not be in Iraqi prisons, even if Iraq met compliance with all requests to destroy any weapons of mass destruction. Though in 2002 at the Arab Summit, Iraq and Kuwait agreed to bilateral negotiations to work out all claims relating to stolen property and prisoners of war. This use-of-force resolution enables the President to commit U.S.046 troops to recover Kuwaiti property.

Whereas the current Iraqi regime has demonstrated its capability and willingness to use weapons of mass destruction against other nations and its own people;

Whereas the current Iraqi regime has demonstrated its continuing hostility toward, and willingness to attack, the United States, including by attempting in 1993 to assassinate former President Bush and by firing on many thousands of occasions on United States and Coalition Armed Forces engaged in enforcing the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council;

KEY ISSUE: The Iraqi regime has never attacked nor does it have the capability to attack the United States. The ''no fly'' zone was not the result of a UN Security Council directive. It was illegally imposed by the United States, Great Britain and France and is not specifically sanctioned by any Security Council resolution.

Whereas members of al Qaida, an organization bearing responsibility for attacks on the United States, its citizens, and interests, including the attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, are known to be in Iraq;

KEY ISSUE: There is no credible intelligence that connects Iraq to the events of 9/11 or to participation in those events by assisting Al Qaida.

Whereas Iraq continues to aid and harbor other international terrorist organizations, including organizations that threaten the lives and safety of American citizens;

KEY ISSUE: Any connection between Iraq support of terrorist groups in Middle East, is an argument for focusing great resources on resolving the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. It is not sufficient reason for the U.S. to launch a unilateral preemptive strike against Iraq.

Whereas the attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001 underscored the gravity of the threat posed by the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by international terrorist organizations;

KEY ISSUE: There is no connection between Iraq and the events of 9/11.

Whereas Iraq's demonstrated capability and willingness to use weapons of mass destruction, the risk that the current Iraqi regime will either employ those weapons to launch a surprise attack against the United States or its Armed Forces or provide them to international terrorists who would do so, and the extreme magnitude of harm that would result to the United States and its citizens from such an attack, combine to justify action by the United States to defend itself;

KEY ISSUE: There is no credible evidence that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction. If Iraq has successfully concealed the production of such weapons since 1998, there is no credible evidence that Iraq has the capability to reach the United States with such weapons. In the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq had a demonstrated capability of biological and chemical weapons, but did not have the willingness to use them against the United States Armed Forces. Congress has not been provided with any credible information, which proves that Iraq has provided international terrorists with weapons of mass destruction.

Whereas United Nations Security Council Resolution 678 authorizes the use of all necessary means to enforce United Nations Security Council Resolution 660 and subsequent relevant resolutions and to compel Iraq to cease certain activities that threaten international peace and security, including the development of weapons of mass destruction and refusal or obstruction of United Nations weapons inspections in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 687, repression of its civilian population in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 688, and threatening its neighbors or United Nations operations in Iraq in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 949;

KEY ISSUE: The UN Charter forbids all member nations, including the United States, from unilaterally enforcing UN resolutions.

Whereas Congress in the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102–1) has authorized the President ''to use United States Armed Forces pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 678 (1990) in order to achieve implementation of Security Council Resolutions 660, 661, 662, 664, 665, 666, 667, 669, 670, 674, and 677'';

KEY ISSUE: The UN Charter forbids all member nations, including the United States, from unilaterally enforcing UN resolutions with military force.

Whereas in December 1991, Congress expressed its sense that it ''supports the use of all necessary means to achieve the goals of United Nations Security Council Resolution 687 as being consistent with the Authorization of Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102–1),'' that Iraq's repression of its civilian population violates United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 and ''constitutes a continuing threat to the peace, security, and stability of the Persian Gulf region,'' and that Congress, ''supports the use of all necessary means to achieve the goals of United Nations Security Council Resolution 688'';

KEY ISSUE: This clause demonstrates the proper chronology of the international process, and contrasts the current march to war. In 1991, the UN Security Council passed a resolution asking for enforcement of its resolution. Member countries authorized their troops to participate in a UN-led coalition to enforce the UN resolutions. Now the President is asking Congress to authorize a unilateral first strike before the UN Security Council had asked its member states to enforce UN resolutions.

Whereas the Iraq Liberation Act (Public Law 105–338) expressed the sense of Congress that it should be the policy of the United States to support efforts to remove from power the current Iraqi regime and promote the emergence of a democratic government to replace that regime;

KEY ISSUE: This ''Sense of Congress'' resolution was not binding. Furthermore, while Congress supported democratic means of removing Saddam Hussein it clearly did not endorse the use of force contemplated in this resolution, nor did it endorse assassination as a policy.

Whereas on September 12, 2002, President Bush committed the United States to ''work with the United Nations Security Council to meet our common challenge'' posed by Iraq and to ''work for the necessary resolutions,'' while also making clear that ''the Security Council resolutions will be enforced, and the just demands of peace and security will be met, or action will be unavoidable'';

Whereas the United States is determined to prosecute the war on terrorism and Iraq's ongoing support for international terrorist groups combined with its development of weapons of mass destruction in direct violation of its obligations under the 1991 cease-fire and other United Nations Security Council resolutions make clear that it is in the national security interests of the United States and in furtherance of the war on terrorism that all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions be enforced, including through the use of force if necessary;

KEY ISSUE: Unilateral action against Iraq will cost the United States the support of the world community, adversely affecting the war on terrorism. No credible intelligence exists which connects Iraq to the events of 9/11 or to those terrorists who perpetrated 9/11. Under international law, the United States does not have the authority to unilaterally order military action to enforce UN Security Council resolutions.

Whereas Congress has taken steps to pursue vigorously the war on terrorism through the provision of authorities and funding requested by the President to take the necessary actions against international terrorists and terrorist organizations, including those nations, organizations or persons who planned, authorized, committed or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001 or harbored such persons or organizations;

KEY ISSUE: The Administration has not provided Congress with any proof that Iraq is in any way connected to the events of 9/11.

Whereas the President and Congress are determined to continue to take all appropriate actions against international terrorists and terrorist organizations, including those nations, organizations or persons who planned, authorized, committed or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such persons or organizations;

KEY ISSUE: The Administration has not provided Congress with any proof that Iraq is in any way connected to the events of 9/11. Furthermore, there is no credible evidence that Iraq has harbored those who were responsible for planning, authorizing or committing the attacks of 9/11.

Whereas the President has authority under the Constitution to take action in order to deter and prevent acts of international terrorism against the United States, as Congress recognized in the joint resolution on Authorization for Use of Military Force (Public Law 107–40); and

KEY ISSUE: This resolution was specific to 9/11. It was limited to a response to 9/11.

Whereas it is in the national security of the United States to restore international peace and security to the Persian Gulf region;

KEY ISSUE: If by the ''national security interests'' of the United States, the Administration means oil, it ought to communicate such to the Congress. A unilateral attack on Iraq by the United States will cause instability and chaos in the region and sow the seeds of future conflicts all over the world.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Florida has 5½ minutes remaining.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased and honored to yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MCCOTTER), a member of the Financial Services Committee, a former member of our Foreign Affairs Committee. I would like to remind my good friend that we still have a GOP vacancy in our committee and we need freedom and democracy believers like the gentleman from Michigan; seniority retained.

Mr. MCCOTTER. I thank the gentlelady. I thank her for her kind words and her attempt to draft me.

In this age of hope and peril, today we all assemble with earnestness and sincerity to discuss matters of liberty and tyranny, matters of life and death.

□ 1320

What we see in Afghanistan is a counterinsurgency operation being led by the United States. It is the most difficult and painful type of military operation to witness because it does involve working with the population, winning hearts and minds, and helping to build the institutions of democracy and liberty at the community and national levels, which have been nonexistent for decades.

Yet because the cause is difficult, it does not mean we can turn away from it, because the Afghan people cannot turn away from it.

In 2006, I was fortunate to be on a CODEL with many of my colleagues, and we had the opportunity to meet women who were serving in the Afghan National Assembly. Despite the difficulties in translation, it was very clear that they wanted to accomplish two things: they wanted to serve the Afghan people, who had entrusted them with their positions; and they wanted to honor the men and women of the United States military, who had risked and given so much for them to have that opportunity.

As I said, I deeply appreciate the sincerity and earnestness of this debate today because, in this instance, clearly, it is not one based upon partisan division, but one based upon the dictates of conscience. I think it is very important that we look into this situation and see that it is not simply the United States that is involved here and that it is not simply a question of leaving without consequence. If we leave now, if we back this resolution, there will be consequences to the female Afghan National Assembly parliamentarians, who are trying to build freedom within that country.

In my discussion with those brave women, they brought up how difficult it was for them: how hard it would be to build a sustainable democracy; to build an economy; to build, in many ways, what we here take for granted.

I said to them that it was very important to remember that the United States, itself, was not always a great national power and a beacon of hope and freedom and that in our darkest days after the Revolution there were many who thought this free Republic would fail, and there were enemies who sought its destruction. Yet, at the founding time, the people of the United States and their leaders were able to take this Nation's democracy and turn it into one that not only secured freedom for itself but one that expanded it to others.

I said that it was within the Halls of the United States Congress, within the Halls of our institution, that you could see the pictures of the Founders, like Jefferson and Madison, hanging from the walls, which remind us of what we have endured, what we enjoy, and what we must return.

I told the Afghan National Assembly women that one day their daughters and granddaughters would look up and see on the walls their portraits hanging in a free Afghanistan that was allied with the Free World against terrorism and that was a beacon, itself, to those who were oppressed—because they will be free, because we will honor our duty not to seek miserly to hold our own freedom for ourselves, and because we will follow what Lincoln said:

In seeking to extend freedom to the enslaved, we ensure freedom for ourselves.

We will continue to stand with the Afghan people. We will continue to honor the commitment to the solemn word of the United States as she gave to that country; and one day, we will look back, and we will be proud of the votes we cast today.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, we have now been in Afghanistan for 113 months, ten months longer than the war in Vietnam. The war in Afghanistan is now the longest conflict in United States history.

Here at home, Americans are out of work, teachers are facing budget cuts, police departments are overstretched, and yet the President and much of Congress continue to cling to the notion that if given more time and more precious taxpayer dollars borrowed from China we will finally—after a decade of war—gain the edge to ''finish the job'' in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I don't buy it. There is no comprehensive political outcome in sight. There is no decisive military outcome that will allow us to declare ''victory.'' There is no meaningful government outside of Kabul, the Afghani security forces are in disarray, and there is unbelievable corruption throughout the Karzai government, police, and security forces.

Despite these realities, the U.S. taxpayer is being asked to foot a $100 billion bill per year—again, all borrowed money that future generations will have to pay back with interest—to continue a failed strategy in Afghanistan. I continue to be extremely concerned that the Afghanistan war has drawn the U.S. into a black hole not completely unlike Vietnam, where we propped up a corrupt government that had no relationship to the rest of the country. Recent events in North Africa and throughout the Middle East have shown us the consequences of similar policies.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support our troops. They have fought heroically and done everything we have asked of them. We should honor those who have served and sacrificed for their country. But we are not honoring those who have served and those who continue to serve by supporting a war without

clear objectives, a clear exit strategy, and without any substantial hope for a ''military victory.''

Clearly an orderly withdrawal can not be accomplished in 9 months. But supporting H. Con. Res. 28 provides an opportunity to send a message to the President that the current strategy and cost of the war in Afghanistan are unsustainable. We need a clear exit strategy. We need a less expensive, less troop intensive policy that could bring about a much better result in Afghanistan. We need to prioritize the needs here at home instead of spending treasure and blood on a seemingly open-ended war in Afghanistan. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H. Con. Res. 28.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, today the House has a chance to make a judgment about the wisdom of continuing our combat role in Afghanistan. In 2009, I came to the floor of the House and declared that I would give the President at least a year to show that his approach could work. For those who choose to actually look at the facts and the results to date, the conclusion is clear: it is time—past time—for us to leave Afghanistan.

Time and again, our military forces would take out one of their field commanders, and every time several more rise to take their place. This is the nature of insurgency, it is the nature of the problem that confronts us, and it is not a problem that will be resolved by the continuous, endless use of military force. The number of insurgent attacks is at an all-time high. The corruption and dysfunctionality of the Afghan government has become legendary. And the cost of this conflict—both in killed and wounded, including the long-term care costs for the hundreds of thousands of veterans of this war—continue to rise. I voted for this resolution today in order to show that I am no longer willing to allow our military and our nation to bear the endless, deadly burden of a war without end that is moving neither our country nor theirs closer to safety and security. I hope the President takes note and works with us to bring our troops home.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, Secretary Gates recently stated that we could be in Afghanistan past the 2014 deadline for complete troop withdrawal. Meanwhile, more than 60 percent of Americans oppose this war, with more than 70 percent of people believing that we should withdraw a substantial number of U.S. troops from Afghanistan this summer.

This is the longest war in U.S. history and all we have to show for it is a higher deficit and more debt.

We already spend the most of any country in the world on defense. The next closest defense-spending country is China—and we spend seven times what they do.

Defense spending currently constitutes about 60 percent of our discretionary spending. And it has increased 86 percent since 1998, becoming more entrenched than any entitlement program. As we're talking about cutting important programs that working families depend on, we should not continue to throw money down an endless hole in Afghanistan.

I recently conducted a survey in my district inquiring about constituents' priorities and discovered that getting out of Afghanistan was second only to job creation. They also agree that one of the best ways to reduce the deficit is through extensive defense spending cuts.

Republicans keep expressing the absolute necessity in cutting $100 billion from the budget over the next five years. Pulling out of Afghanistan would, all by itself, save us over $100 billion in the upcoming budget.

It is time for Congress to reassert its Constitutional war powers authority and set a time line for complete withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan.

I am proud to support this resolution by Representatives KUCINICH and JONES that gives Congress, and therefore the American people, the power to decide whether America enters into or continues a war.

I urge my colleagues to follow the will of the American people and support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 28, a resolution that directs the President, pursuant to the War Powers Resolution, to remove our troops from Afghanistan no later than December 31st, 2011.

Secretary Gates recently stated that we could be in Afghanistan past the 2014 deadline for complete troop withdrawal. Meanwhile, more than 60 percent of Americans oppose the war, with more than 70 percent of people believing that we should withdraw most troops from Afghanistan this summer. I recently conducted a survey in my district inquiring about constituents' priorities and discovered that getting out of Afghanistan was second only to job creation. They also agree that one of the best ways to reduce the deficit is through extensive defense spending cuts.

This is the longest war in U.S. history and all we have to show for it is a higher deficit and more debt. Yet Republicans, who continue to tout the merits of a balanced budget, refuse to consider ending this expensive war, let alone consider modest defense-spending cuts.

Defense spending currently constitutes almost 60 percent of our discretionary spending. As we are forced to consider cutting important programs that working families depend on, we should not continue to throw money down an endless hole in Afghanistan. Republicans continue to express the absolute necessity in cutting $100 billion from the budget over the next five years. Pulling out of Afghanistan would, all by itself, save us over $100 billion in the upcoming budget.

The Majority is not listening to the American people. The American people want us out of Afghanistan and they want a solid plan to improve the economy and create jobs, neither of which the Republicans deem worthy enough to address.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this resolution proposed by Representatives KUCINICH and JONES that gives Congress, and therefore the American people, the Power to decide whether America enters into or continues a war. I urge my colleagues to follow the will of the people and support this resolution.

Ms. CLARKE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I am writing to urge my support to bring our troops our home. The recent debate on removing the United States Armed Forces from Afghanistan has been the topic of many discussions and now is the time to take action. This devastating war has continued on for nearly a decade and it has taken the lives of more than 1,400 Americans and cost taxpayers over $366 billion.

The war in Afghanistan is not worth fighting. We need to end this national humiliation and redirect war funding. The scope of our interest in Afghanistan has been exceeded and it is time to bring this war to a successful conclusion. While we have achieved hard-earned milestones, the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated and the threat to our national security remains unaffected.

We can no longer fight this war. We have to leave it up to the Afghan people to determine their own fate and future. I ask my colleagues to join me in taking a stand to bring our troops home. Our economy is at stake, the precious lives of our troops and their families hang in the balance and the integrity of the United States has been severely jeopardized.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues, we're debating the wrong resolution here today.

We should be debating a resolution that honors the continuing sacrifice, service, the courage and the steadfastness of our men and women in uniform—all volunteers—as they work to carry out their missions in the global war on terror. And their families back at home.

These warriors serve today in Afghanistan, and yes, in Iraq.

Both are active war zones where there are no ''front lines'' and every deployed servicemember lays his or her life on the line every day.

And they have made significant progress. General Petreaus told our Defense Subcommittee this morning that ''The momentum of the Taliban has been halted in much of the country and reversed in some important areas.''

The Afghan Security Forces are growing in number and capability.

And the day when we turn all operations over to the Afghans gets closer and closer.

None of this has been easy.

Progress has been made through hard fighting and considerable sacrifice of so many Americans and our allies.

There have been tough losses along the way. And there have been setbacks as well as successes.

But instead of debating a resolution that honors the sacrifice of our brave warfighters, we are considering a measure that seeks to ''turn off the lights and slam the door as we withdraw.''

Well, we've been down this road before.

Two decades ago we celebrated alongside our Afghan allies as the invading Russian military rolled back into the USSR in defeat.

And when the celebration ended, we walked away—we did not follow-up with the necessary investments in diplomacy and development assistance, turning our back on Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Had we not done that in the early 1990s, we would have better secured our own country's future, as well as peace and stability in the region.

Instead of intensifying our humanitarian efforts to help the Afghans meet their postwar challenges, we simply walked away—leaving a destroyed country that lacked roads, schools, and any plan or hope for rebuilding.

Into this void marched the Taliban and al-Qaeda. My Colleagues, as they say, ''the rest is history'' for the Afghans and for all Americans:

Horrors perpetrated on Afghan men, women and children;

A curtain of oppression which denied half the population—women—any rights and dignity;

Closed schools. Destroyed cultural institutions and national treasures;

A modern-day Dark Ages;

Mr. Speaker, the resolution we debate today would have us repeat that sad and dangerous saga.

I urge defeat of the resolution.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Kucinich resolution directing the President to remove United States Armed Forces from Afghanistan.

It is time to bring U.S. involvement in the war in Afghanistan to an end and to bring our troops home. The war effort in Afghanistan is no longer serving its purpose of enhancing the security of the United States, which should be our goal.

We were attacked on 9/11 by al Qaeda. Al Qaeda had bases in Afghanistan. It made sense to go in and destroy those bases. And we did. We have every right, we have every duty to destroy bases which are being used to plot against the United States. But the CIA tells us that there are now fewer than 100 al Qaeda personnel in all of the country of Afghanistan.

It is past time to admit that our legitimate purpose in Afghanistan—to destroy al Qaeda bases—has long since been accomplished. But it is a fool's errand to try to remake a country that nobody since Genghis Khan has managed to conquer. What makes us think, what arrogance gives us the right to assume that we can succeed where the Mongols, the British, the Soviets failed? No government in Afghanistan, no government in Kabul, has ever been able to make its writ run in the entire country.

Why have we undertaken to invent a government that is not supported by the majority of the people, a government that is corrupt, and try to impose it on this country? Afghanistan is in the middle of what is at this point a 35-year civil war. We have no business intervening in that civil war, we have no ability to win it for one side or the other, and we have no necessity to win it for one side or the other. This whole idea of counterinsurgency, that we are going to persuade the people who are left alive after our firepower is applied to love the government that we like is absurd.

It will take tens of years, hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars, tens of thousands of American lives, if it can be done at all, and we don't need to do it. It's their country. If they want to have a civil war, we can't stop them. We can't choose the rulers that they have, we don't have to like the rulers that they have, and we don't have to like their choices. It's not up to us.

At this point we must recognize that rebuilding Afghanistan is both beyond our ability and beyond our mandate to prevent terrorists from attacking the United States. And if it be said that there are terrorists operating in Afghanistan, that may be, but it is also true of Yemen, Somalia and many other countries. We do not need to invade and conquer and occupy all those countries, and Afghanistan provides no greater necessity or justification for military operations.

We are throwing $100 billion a year—plus countless lives—down a drainpipe, for no useful purpose at all—and with very little discussion of our purposes and of whether our policy matches our purposes.

To continue so bad a policy at so high a cost is simply unconscionable. It is unjustifiable to sacrifice more money and more lives this way. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting to bring the U.S. involvement in the war in Afghanistan to a close.

Now, I want to say a word about supporting the troops. I believe it is more supportive of the troops to bring them home from a war that they should not be fighting than it is to give them weapons to fight an unnecessary war in which some of them, unfortunately, will lose their lives.

So I say support our troops. Bring them home. Support the country. Stop fighting where it no longer makes sense.

Vote for this resolution. Let's bring our troops home.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support H. Con. Res. 28, a resolution requiring the removal of all United States Armed Forces from Afghanistan. I believe it is time to bring the United States Military's involvement in Afghanistan to a close.

Since the beginning of the Afghanistan War, the United States and Coalition Forces have lost 2,347 service men and women. Tens of thousands have suffered from other disabilities or psychological harm. With thousands of Texas Guardsmen currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, I will never forget their bravery in fighting for the freedoms, liberties, aid human dignity of the Afghanistan people.

Our nation's economic and national security interests are not served by a policy of an open-ended war in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, our soldiers have fought for us, now it's time for us to fight for them. I encourage my colleagues to support this resolution and help bring our soldiers home.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Speaker, while I support the intent of this bill, I rise in reluctant opposition to H. Con. Res. 28, legislation introduced by Congressman KUCINICH directing the President to remove U.S. Armed Forces from Afghanistan within 30 days.

I agree with Congressman KUCINICH that we must have an exit strategy and a concrete plan to withdraw troops from Afghanistan. However, I voted against this resolution when it came up for a vote last year because I believed that withdrawing all troops 30 days after enactment of the bill was unrealistic.

Yesterday, along with a large number of my like-minded colleagues in the House, I sent a letter to President Obama urging him to prepare for a significant and sizeable drawdown of troops from Afghanistan that begins this July. I ask for permission to include this letter for the record.

Last December, the Obama Administration concluded in its review of the war in Afghanistan that we will be ready to begin a responsible drawdown in July 2011. This week, General Petraeus testified before Congress that he would keep our military and counterinsurgency gains in mind as he begins to provide recommendations to the President on commencing our military drawdown in July.

We have now entered the tenth year that American troops have been in Afghanistan, the longest war in U.S. history. An overwhelming majority of the American people—including an increasing number of Members of Congress—supports a safe and significant redeployment of U.S troops from Afghanistan soon.

There is no question that we need to end our mission in Afghanistan. I will carefully review the Obama Administration's assessment of the war effort, including plans for a drawdown, in the coming months. Insufficient progress in withdrawing U.S. troops by July 2011 will compel me to support a resolution like this in the future.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, March 16, 2011.

Hon. BARACK OBAMA,
President of the United States,
The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT, We write to you to: express our utmost support for your planned drawdown of the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan beginning no later than July of this year. We, the undersigned members of Congress, believe the forthcoming reduction in U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan must be significant and sizeable, and executed in an orderly fashion.

Our nation's economic and national security interests are not served by a policy of open-ended war in Afghanistan. At a time of severe economic distress, the war in Afghanistan is costing the United States more than $100 billion per year, excluding the long-term costs of care for returning military servicemembers. At the same time, military and intelligence officials agree that Al Qaeda's presence in Afghanistan is diminished and that there will not be a military solution to resolve the current situation. It is simply unsustainable for our nation to maintain a costly, military-first strategy in Afghanistan.

A significant redeployment of U.S. troops from Afghanistan beginning in July 2011 will send a clear signal that the United States does not seek a permanent presence in Afghanistan. This transition will provide incentive for internal stakeholders to improve upon the political status quo, reduce corruption, and take meaningful steps toward the establishment of an effective, trustworthy, and inclusive governance structure. A meaningful start to withdrawal will also empower U.S. diplomatic engagement with regional and global stakeholders who share a common interest in the long-term stability of Afghanistan.

The majority of the American people overwhelmingly support a rapid shift toward withdrawal in Afghanistan. In fact, a Gallup Poll released on February 2, 2011 indicated that 72% of Americans favor action this year to ''speed up the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan.'' Let us be clear. The redeployment of a minimal number of U.S. troops from Afghanistan in July will not meet the expectations of Congress or the American people.

Mr. President, as you work to finally bring an end to the war in Iraq by the end of this year, we must commit ourselves to ensuring that our nation's military engagement in Afghanistan does not become the status quo. It is time to focus on securing a future of economic opportunity and prosperity for the American people and move swiftly to end America's longest war in Afghanistan.

Mr. President, we look forward to working with you to make that goal a reality.

Sincerely,

Joe Baca; Tammy Baldwin; Karen Bass; Lois Capps; Michael E. Capuano; André Carson; Yvette D. Clarke; Steve Cohen; John Conyers, Jr.; Jerry F. Costello; Elijah E. Cummings; Danny K. Davis (IL); Peter A. DeFazio; Rosa L. DeLauro; Theodore E. Deutch; John J. Duncan, Jr. (TN); Donna F. Edwards; Keith Ellison; Sam Farr; Bob Filner; Barney Frank; Marcia L. Fudge; John Garamendi; Raúl M. Grijalva; Luis V. Gutierrez; Alcee L. Hastings; Maurice D. Hinchey; Mazie K. Hirono; Rush D. Holt; Michael M. Honda; Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.; Sheila Jackson Lee; Eddie

Bernice Johnson; Hank Johnson, Jr.; Timothy V. Johnson; Walter B. Jones; Barbara Lee; John B. Larson; John Lewis; Zoe Lofgren; Ben Ray Luján; Carolyn B. Maloney; Edward J. Markey; Doris O. Matsui; Jim McDermott; James P. McGovern; Michael H. Michaud; George Miller; Gwen Moore; James P. Moran; Christopher S. Murphy; Grace Napolitano; Eleanor Holmes Norton; John W. Olver; Bill Pascrell, Jr.; Ron Paul; Donald M. Payne; Chellie Pingree; Jared Polis; David E. Price; Mike Quigley; Rep, Charles B. Rangel; Laura Richardson; Lucille Roybal-Allard; Linda T. Sánchez; Loretta Sanchez; Janice D. Schakowsky; Bobby Scott; José E. Serrano; Albio Sires; Louise McIntosh Slaughter; Jackie Speier; Pete Stark; Mike Thompson (CA); John F. Tierney; Edolphus Towns; Niki Tsongas; Maxine Waters; Anthony D. Weiner; Peter Welch; Lynn C. Woolsey, Members of Congress.

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this resolution with great reluctance.

I have had many great conversations and discussions with the sponsor of this resolution since coming to Congress about the issues of war and peace and justice. He even came to my district last year to join me in a town hall on the war in Afghanistan. He's been a great leader on this issue and a great friend.

I agree with the gentleman about the need to bring our troops home from Afghanistan as soon as possible. Recently, I joined a number of my colleagues in writing to the President to make clear our belief that the troop withdrawals from Afghanistan should be "substantial, significant, and orderly." The gentleman from Ohio did not join that letter although as I said, I know he shares the same goals of all those who signed it.

A few weeks ago, I voted for an amendment to H.R. 1 that would limit funding for the war in Afghanistan to $10 billion, with the hope that those funds would be used by the Defense Department to plan and implement a timetable for the safe and expeditious withdrawal of our troops.

I want an end to these wars. One of the criteria that I have used for supporting those efforts and similar efforts in the past by a number of my colleagues is that we have to allow our military planners to implement that withdrawal in a way that is safe, orderly and responsible.

I doubt that the 30 day-withdrawal deadline in this bill meets that criteria. The bill itself recognizes that by giving the President the option to delay that withdrawal through the end of the year.

Although I am eager to withdraw, I am beset with a nagging question: how practical is it to move 100,000 troops and the associated equipment out of a country half way around the world in 30 days in an orderly, safe, and responsible fashion?

I support getting our troops out of Afghanistan. But we have to do so wisely. We can't waive a magic wand today and they are gone tomorrow or dismiss concerns about their safety. That is why on the issue of how that withdrawal is conducted, I have always supported legislation that defers that question to our military planners.

Again, even the letter that was sent to the President recently by a number of my colleagues, such as BARBARA LEE and JIM MCGOVERN, who like myself opposed the escalation of this war and want all of our troops home soon, does not dictate size or set a timetable for those withdrawals after July 2011.

That letter however did make clear that "a significant redeployment from Afghanistan beginning in July 2011 will send a clear signal that the United States does not seek a permanent presence in Afghanistan."

Even though July does not begin for over 100 days from now, sending that letter in March allows the military to have plenty of time to plan for a sizeable withdrawal.

This was the same gist of several bills by Mr. MCGOVERN last year that asked the military to give us their withdrawal plan by a certain date, including any reasons for why a redeployment might be delayed, rather than having Congress mandate that date.

Again, I support this resolution reluctantly because it sends an important signal to the Afghanistan government and its people that the U.S. is not intent on an endless occupation and that after ten years in America's longest war in history, we cannot morally or financially continue to afford this war. To the extent this resolution does that, I am in full support. However, again, my concerns remain about its method.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, once again we are debating this issue. And once again I will vote in support of ending our involvement in Afghanistan.

Our ongoing commitment in Afghanistan has proved exceedingly difficult and costly—and at a time when we can ill-afford the $100 billion a year to sustain it. After years of war, the economic and military costs are straining our servicemembers, their families, and the country—they are simply too high.

President Obama increased our commitment there while also defining a goal of withdrawal. But our increased efforts have not yielded enough progress.

I have joined with my colleagues in sending a letter, led by Rep. BARBARA LEE, to the President supporting his planned drawdown of the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan beginning no later than July of this year.

It is time to bring this war to a responsible end.

Our brave men and women in uniform have fought well and continue to deserve our full support and commitment to return them home safely to their families and loved ones. They have fought with honor, at great cost, in the face of great challenges. I am humbled by their sacrifice.

While I support the President and our military leadership, I believe we must send a message that the U.S. cannot sustain further commitments in Afghanistan.

I believe the resolution before us today sends that message, and that is why I support it.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to the order of the House of Wednesday, March 16, 2011, the previous question is ordered.

The question is on the concurrent resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PROHIBITING FEDERAL FUNDING OF NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 174, I call up the bill (H.R. 1076) to prohibit Federal funding of National Public Radio and the use of Federal funds to acquire radio content, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 174, the bill is considered read.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1076

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. PROHIBITION ON FEDERAL FUNDING OF NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO AND RADIO CONTENT ACQUISITION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—No Federal funds may be made available—

(1) to an organization that is incorporated as of the date of the enactment of this Act for each of the purposes described in subsection (c), or to any successor organization;

(2) for payment of dues to an organization described in paragraph (1); or

(3) for the acquisition of radio programs (including programs to be distributed or disseminated over the Internet) by or for the use of a radio broadcast station that is a public broadcast station (as defined in section 397(6) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 397(6))).

(b) RULES OF CONSTRUCTION.—

(1) OTHER PURPOSES.—Paragraphs (2) and (3) of subsection (a) shall not be construed to prohibit the making available of Federal funds to any entity, including an entity that engages in the payment described in such paragraph (2) or the acquisition described in such paragraph (3), for purposes other than such payment or acquisition.

(2) RADIO CONTENT ACQUISITION BY BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS OR DEFENSE MEDIA ACTIVITY.—Subsection (a)(3) shall not be construed to apply to the acquisition of radio programs by the Broadcasting Board of Governors or the Defense Media Activity.

(c) PURPOSES DESCRIBED.—The purposes described in this subsection are the following:

(1) To propose, plan and develop, to acquire, purchase and lease, to prepare, produce and record, and to distribute, license and otherwise make available radio programs to be broadcast over noncommercial educational radio broadcast stations, networks and systems.

(2) To engage in research study activities with respect to noncommercial educational radio programming and broadcasting.

(3) To lease, purchase, acquire and own, to order, have, use and contract for, and to otherwise obtain, arrange for and provide technical equipment and facilities for the production, recording and distribution of radio programs for broadcast over noncommercial educational radio stations, networks and systems.

(4) To establish and maintain one or more service or services for the production, duplication, promotion and circulation of radio programs on tape, cassettes, records or any other means or mechanism suitable for noncommercial educational transmission and broadcast thereof.