

Mr. Speaker, America is an incredibly welcoming Nation. It is a wonderful Nation that for years and centuries, we held our arms wide. We welcome those that choose to legally enter. We love the energy and vitality that they bring. We love their excitement. We love the way they bring an entrepreneurial spirit and they bring diversity and they bring to each of us a challenge, a very well-placed challenge, to work harder, to do better.

And we love it when they succeed, and we celebrate it. We take the time to celebrate that success, every little success, with them. And when they receive that citizenship after years of hard work, we are standing there with them, celebrating with them.

Some of them are in our families, some are in our extended families; and some of our close friends that we love like family have been through this process. And because of this, we stand with them in saying, Let's secure the border and end the practice of illegal entry into this Nation.

Let's be certain that legal entry and legal immigration are recognized and rewarded and celebrated in the appropriate way, as they are meant to be. But let's roll up our sleeves and let's get to work securing the border, ending illegal entry into this country, ending the human trafficking, ending the flow of drugs, ending the flow of weapons.

Let's be fair with our law enforcement officials and our Border Patrol agents that are on the border, who are tasked each and every day with keeping this border secure and, in turn, with being the first responders on the issue of border security. And let's be certain that we continue to put our focus right where it should be in realizing that border security and national security are one and the same.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, it isn't about immigration, it is about illegal entry. It is also about the rule of law.

There is a sense from the American people that we have lost control of these borders, and they are right. There is a sense that if we lose control of the borders, that then we are going to have more of the war on terror fought on American soil.

Mr. Speaker, it is issue number one. Securing this border is the most important issue that faces this body today.

I want to thank the House leadership for being so consistent in saying that this body will make border security the primary focus of our work. I want to thank our colleagues who are working on the field hearings and working to be certain that the message is communicated with our constituents and with our colleagues here on the Hill, that this House is ready to see borders secured and national security as our top priority.

□ 2045

THE IRAQ WATCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of Jan-

uary 4, 2005, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, again we come to the floor this evening as part of what we have come to call the Iraq Watch. And first and foremost, as my distinguished colleagues have in previous occasions, I note that we want to distinguish first and foremost the war from the warriors.

The men and women who serve this great country of ours deserve our unending respect and support for the kind of valor, the kind of job that they perform on a regular basis. Having said goodbye to far too many of them, many in our Reservists and National Guards who have been deployed, redeployed, deployed and then redeployed again, it is gut wrenching and heartrending to see what their families are going through. And so our thoughts and prayers are always with them, along with the support of this Congress.

I further would like to say that it is important to distinguish the war from the warriors so that we have an opportunity to lay out policy for the American public. I want to start this evening with a policy that I believe sends a very strong message to the men and women who wear the uniform and their families here at home that are caring for them and caring about them.

We have introduced a resolution that directs the President to send a clear message to the Iraqi Government that during this time of insurrection, a time when the Pew poll most recently indicates that 47 percent of the Iraqi people believe that it is okay and justifiable to kill American soldiers, it is unacceptable; and we must send a clear message to the Iraqi Government that American soldiers who have been killed, maimed, wounded, kidnapped, tortured, that we will not, in any shape, manner or form, tolerate amnesty for those who have perpetrated those acts against these brave men and women.

In my humble estimation, there is no reason why this shouldn't be a bipartisan resolution. We have over 100 Democratic signatures on the bill. We would like to get this bill passed before we adjourn for the August recess. We have been able to bring so many incidental bills to this floor by unanimous consent. Surely we can bring a bill to the floor that sends a clear message to our troops that we are putting the Iraqi Government on notice that it is not okay to kill, maim, kidnap, torture American men and women in our armed services.

And so it is my sincere hope, and we have had some overtures from the other side of the aisle, but so far, no movement. And this should be a non-partisan issue where we bring this resolution to the floor and take it up and pass it, and send it on to the President so that he can send a very clear mes-

More important than sending a clear message to the Iraqis is also sending a message to our troops that we here in this country stand behind them and their sacrifice that they have made and will not see this all go for naught being waived with an amnesty provision in the midst of an insurrection of paramount proportions that is currently going on within Iraq.

So I want to start there. And then I would like to quickly just segue to a quote. This quote was put together by Graham Allison, and Mr. Allison is a Harvard professor who had this to say that "with regard to the current situation that we face in Iraq, it is clear that we have diverted essential resources from the fight against al Qaeda. We have allowed the Taliban to regroup in Afghanistan, fostered neglect of the Iranian nuclear threat, undermined alliances critical to preventing terrorism, devastated America's standing with every country in Europe, and destroyed it with the Muslim world."

Mr. Allison goes on to say: "Are we any safer today from the threat of nuclear attack, especially by way of a dirty bomb, than we were on September 11?" His conclusion is, no. And he says: "It can be summed up in one word as to the reason why we are not safer: Iraq."

And with that, let me acknowledge and yield to my distinguished colleague from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT), who has, from the outset of this war, through public forums and discussion, been on record of having protested the sending of our troops into Iraq.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, my friend. I hope that you had a pleasant break. I know you were working, but I hope that you enjoyed your stay at home.

Professor Allison's observations really echo the conclusion that was reached by a bipartisan group of experts, including many from the administration of President Reagan, and that conclusion was that the United States is losing the war on terror.

We read that our friends on the other side of the aisle have made a political decision to talk about national security, to talk about terror and what they have accomplished. Well, the truth is, nothing has been accomplished, except the loss of thousands of American lives with a financial cost going on some half a trillion dollars.

You know, one only has to watch the nightly news. I was in the cloakroom earlier and watched the national news. It was depressing, it was sad, it was tragic. What is going on in Baghdad today and all over Iraq is an orgy of violence and blood-letting.

We hear these distinctions between sectarian strife, between insurgents versus the terrorists. I still can't quite figure them out. All I know is that lives are being lost, that we Americans are taking this burden on by ourselves.

And don't talk to me about the coalition. It is an American burden almost exclusively.

Let me just read to you this report from *The Washington Post*. And, again, this is a survey taken of some 116 experts. In the relationship between Iraq and the war on terror, I think it is all too sad that many of our friends and colleagues on the other side, but particularly in the administration, have an alternate reality. We have made these arguments before, that the invasion of Iraq had nothing to do with the war on terror. There was, with one exception, unanimous support to invade Afghanistan to deal a blow to the Taliban, which were allowing al Qaeda safe haven and the ability to train and to grow.

What we have done with this policy is we have created more terrorists than existed in 2001. There has been an explosion, not just of violence; there has been an explosion of terrorists. We have made Iraq into a breeding ground for terrorists. They are leaving Iraq, and they are going back to Afghanistan, as you pointed out, Mr. LARSON. There is a resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and things are beginning to unravel again.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Well, to your point, you know, if we go back to the outset of the invasion of Iraq, we can trace it back to the summer of 2002, with the President's address at West Point, where he announced the doctrine of preemption and unilateralism. And as you will recall, who were the staunchest critics of the President at the time? It was not Senator KENNEDY. It was not Senator BYRD. It wasn't BILL DELAHUNT or JIM McDERMOTT or MAXINE WATERS or myself. It was Scowcroft, Eagleberger, Baker, Kissinger, because they understood the perils present in this kind of foreign policy, to abandon the precepts of Casper Weinberger and saying the United States should never enter into a military conflict unless its vital interests are threatened. And we knew that that was not the case, and the Powell corollary to that which is, if we go in, we go in with overwhelming force and secure the country.

Mr. DELAHUNT. And you know where we didn't do that, John?

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. DELAHUNT. We didn't do that in Afghanistan.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. We did not.

Mr. DELAHUNT. We cut and ran from Afghanistan. We were distracted by this vision, this neoconservative vision of invading Iraq and bringing stability and democracy to the Middle East. And yet now, now we are paying the price in Afghanistan.

I yield back to my friend.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Because of the word of Ahmad Chalabi. So what has become the Chalabi-Cheney nexus has led us into this quagmire that we

find ourselves into today. And as you point out, we have diverted the necessary funds that are needed to combat terrorism.

We still do not have Osama bin Laden or Mullah Omar. They are still at large. And we need to make sure that if we are going to send a strong message around the world that this kind of terrorist act will not be tolerated, that we refocus and regroup.

It is also pointed out in several articles over this weekend that we still can prevail in Afghanistan if we put the resources there and support President Karzai and make sure that we regroup and redetermine our effort to put down the Taliban and to focus on weeding out those elements of al Qaeda that still exist along the Pakistani border and throughout Afghanistan that has become once again overwhelmed with warlords.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I know we have been joined by several of our colleagues, Congresswoman WATERS and Congressman VAN HOLLEN, and of course I see Mr. McDERMOTT over there also. And I know Mr. VAN HOLLEN has expended a considerable amount of time and effort in becoming conversant, an expert, if you will, with what is occurring in Afghanistan. But before I yield to either him or to MAXINE WATERS, let us just take a look at USA Today.

□ 2100

This is dated June 20 of 2006, more than 4 years after we invaded Afghanistan. The headline reads: "Revived Taliban Waging Full-Blown Insurgency." I know that all of us who are interested in this particular issue can tell you that what is happening in Afghanistan today is very dangerous for stability, for the very fragile, extremely fragile democracy; that Afghanistan has become a narco-state that is providing 90 percent of the world's heroin. What have we wrought with this policy?

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Reclaiming my time, I thank you, Mr. DELAHUNT, for your comments; and as you point out, we have been joined by several of our esteemed colleagues. MAXINE WATERS has been in the forefront of making sure that the message continues to get out across this Nation with regard to the current situation in Iraq. She has been forthright in leading the Out of Iraq Caucus in the Democratic Caucus, and also has embraced wholeheartedly JACK MURTHA's proposal.

And, with that, I yield to the gentlewoman from California.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you so very much, Mr. LARSON, for yielding and for organizing this special order.

I certainly did come to the floor today to talk about what is going on in Iraq, but as I sat here and I listened to you in this colloquy that you have about what is going on in Afghanistan, I cannot help but join you and commend you for forcing some attention

on the fact that we are going backwards in Afghanistan.

It is shameful, because we did abandon the struggle in Afghanistan and took our resources in a direction where we were supposed to have been finding and bringing to the bar of justice Osama bin Laden. And as we look at what is happening, we find that Mr. Karzai is simply isolated in Kabul and that he cannot even move around, that with all of the protection that we are providing, his life is in danger.

The Taliban is growing stronger every day; and we told our government, we told this administration, that the poppy fields were beginning to multiply in Afghanistan. And I have to tell you, this administration has turned a blind eye to the fact that the poppy fields are just overflowing. As a matter of fact, it seems as if we even understood and we allowed the poppy fields to become a source of revenue for somebody. The warlords have basically divided up the territories, and they all have their own plots and acreage, and they all are earning money; and we are about to lose again in Afghanistan.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Reclaiming my time, when you say "poppy fields," you are referring to drug trafficking, correct?

Ms. WATERS. That is what I am referring to, absolutely. And I am so glad that you are making it plain.

The fact of the matter is, the growing and cultivating of poppy seeds in Afghanistan is the drug trade that is flowing off into that Pakistan border that we cannot seem to get under control. We have this so-called great relationship with Mr. Musharraf in Pakistan. But guess what? While he is talking to us and we are funding him and we are so-called cooperating, he tells us there is nothing he can do about the lawlessness on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. And it is believed by everybody that that is where Osama bin Laden really is. And so I do not know who our friends are anymore in that region.

Having said that, I think you rightfully identified that we directed the resources away from Afghanistan and we went into this so-called war in Iraq because we were after Osama bin Laden, and we created this war on terrorism. And we led the American people to believe, the President did, that somehow, by doing this, we were going to get a handle on terrorism, we were going to capture Osama bin Laden, and everything was going to be all right.

But I come here this evening as the Chair of the 72-member Out of Iraq Caucus. For more than a year, we have been working to conclude our involvement in Iraq and to bring our soldiers home. We did not believe this war was justified. In fact, many of us believed that the administration's so-called evidence justifying the war was truly exaggerated and very misleading. Furthermore, the administration's handling of this war has severely undermined our efforts in Iraq, and our service members are the ones that have

paid and continue to pay the price for this mismanagement. It is long past time to bring our troops home and reunite them with their families.

Mr. Speaker, the violence in Iraq is almost beyond comprehension. Every day we hear about killings, bombings, kidnappings, and other forms of violence that create chaos throughout Iraq. Today's headline says it all. Let me give you an example: "Baghdad Jolted by Sectarian Killing Sprees and Bombings," the L.A. Times; "Scores of Sunnis Killed in Baghdad," the Washington Post; "Baghdad Erupts in Mob Violence," the New York Times; and "Fifteen Killed in Iraq Bombings, Shootings," the Associated Press.

Unfortunately, today is no different than any other day in Iraq. The violence continues and scores of individuals are violently killed or injured. In today's version of the daily carnage, two car bombs exploded, claiming the lives of at least seven people and wounding 17 others.

Yesterday, Shiite gangs killed 36 Sunnis. Most of these victims were killed execution style, and several showed signs of torture. Later the same day, in retaliation, Sunnis detonated two car bombs, which killed at least 19 people, wounded 59, and damaged a Shiite mosque.

And we are saying, maybe, it is about to be a civil war? Mr. LARSON, I submit to you, there is a civil war going on in Iraq today.

Last week, a bomb exploded in Sadr City, one of the Shiite sections of Baghdad, killing 62 people and injuring more than 100 others. It was the deadliest attack since Iraq's new government headed by Prime Minister al Maliki took office in May. Almost 1,600 Iraqis were killed in June, 16 percent more than in May.

The violence has claimed the lives of more than 1,000 Iraqis per month since February. In fact, statistics compiled by the Iraqi Government indicate that the rate of killing in Iraq has increased since the death of Abu Musab al Zarqawi in June, something President Bush declared would be a turning point in the Iraq war.

Sadly, the number of U.S. servicemembers who have died continues to grow as well. As of today, 2,541 U.S. troops have died in Iraq; more than 18,700 have been injured.

The violence and death has gone on long enough. It is time to redeploy our troops out of Iraq and refocus our efforts on the war on terrorism, something this administration has neglected.

The Out of Iraq Caucus believes that Congressman JOHN MURTHA's resolution, H.J. Res. 73, is the strongest plan to conclude the war and permit our soldiers to return to their loved ones.

Mr. LARSON, I thank you for yielding. Let me just conclude by saying this: You and others are here on the floor this evening, as you have come time and time again. The news media on Sunday mornings on most of the cor-

porate media shows do not get the kind of conversation that we are having here today. They do not get this kind of conversation because they are not willing to listen to the voices that are challenging the President and the establishment in this total way that we do. They like to have it nuanced: I voted for the war and perhaps it has not been managed the way that it should have been managed, but we cannot get out. We have got to stay the course.

The news media is not willing to hear what we are saying. And so the people out there who are trying to get the information, who are trying to listen to what we are all saying, just do not have all the opportunities because over and over again they are using the talking heads and the voices of people who are not here nor there, but somewhere in the middle, who are not willing to say that we have to bring our troops home.

Finally, I am a Democrat, and I cherish my involvement in this party, and I think I know what we stand for. And I think I know what so many people have sacrificed for and have fought for. We have an election going on, and I know people sometimes do not have the courage to take the tough position, but in not doing so, we are watching our tremendous resources being just used up on this misplaced war.

Our soldiers are at risk in more than one way. These young people, 19, 18, 20 years old, have never been out of their hometowns before, who do not know a Sunni from a Shiite from a Kurd, are given the most sophisticated weapons and told to shoot anything that moves. And when they do, we talk about how horrible it is.

This is a mess. This is unconscionable. Not only are we misusing the American taxpayers' money, not only are we placing Americans more at risk, but we are also sacrificing our young people in more ways than one.

So I thank you for the opportunity to share this evening with you.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. I thank the gentlewoman for her comments, and I would like to further substantiate what she had to say before about the trafficking of narcotics, especially opium poppies. Since 2001, it increased from 200 metric tons to over 4,200 metric tons in just 2004.

And our colleague from Maryland, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, has written in the Washington Post and, I think, given very insightful comment on the situation in Afghanistan; and I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, Mr. LARSON, for his leadership on this.

And, Mr. DELAHUNT, thank you.

Let me just begin where you left off, Mr. DELAHUNT, with Afghanistan, because I think it is very important that we go back to that terrible day of September 11, 2001, and remember where the attack came from. It came from Afghanistan, organized by Osama bin

Laden and al Qaeda, and they were given sanctuary by the Taliban. And the world was with us when we decided to respond to the terrible attacks. The United Nations General Assembly voted unanimously to support our effort. NATO, for the first time in the history of the alliance, invoked the provisions of the article that said an attack against one is an attack on all.

And so it seems to me that the number one priority here should be to finish the business and complete the mission. We remember that fateful picture of President Bush on the aircraft carrier back in May, 2003, talking about "Mission Accomplished" with the great banner. Well, the mission is not accomplished. The people responsible for the attacks of September 11, 2001, are still somewhere along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. And that is why I think many of us were very surprised just last week to learn that the Central Intelligence Agency, the CIA, has closed down, closed down, the unit that was first established many years ago with the specific purpose of tracking down and hunting down Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda.

And let me just say this: I know a lot of us had to be scratching our heads when we saw that, because the American people know well that we have not completed that mission, and I think it is important that they know that the individual who first started that unit, a former member of the CIA, Michael Scheuer, was also very surprised and perplexed. He is the one that was the head of what was called Alec Station, this unit dedicated to tracking down Osama bin Laden. And he is now retired from the CIA, but here is what he said, It reflected a view within the agency, the CIA, that Mr. bin Laden was no longer the threat that he once was. And Mr. Scheuer said, and I think most of us would agree, that that view was mistaken, that Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda remain a very virulent threat.

□ 2115

Here is what Mr. Scheuer had to say: "This will clearly denigrate our operations against al Qaeda. These days at the agency, bin Laden and al Qaeda appear to be treated merely as first among equals." First among equals.

These are the individuals, this is the organization that was responsible for the attacks on this country of September 11. They have disbanded the unit dedicated to tracking him down, and they have gotten themselves bogged down in a mess in Iraq. We have not finished the job in Afghanistan. We need to finish the job.

We are sending the absolutely wrong signal, in my view, by reducing the number of forces committed to the southern part of Afghanistan, whereas Mr. DELAHUNT pointed out we have seen a great resurgence in activity of the Taliban along that southern area. That is the very area where the head of the Taliban, who is still also at large, made his base.

So I think that it is important that we remember why we are engaged in this great national effort and the fact we have not accomplished our mission, and in fact, at the agency, they are disbanding one of the units that was established for that express purpose.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield for a moment, I would like to just quote another statement by Michael Scheuer that I really think tells it all in a very concise way. All of us should listen because this was an individual who participated in that group of experts, by the way, again bipartisan, many well-known Republican foreign policy experts who served in the Reagan administration, and this is what Michael Scheuer had to say, the man who headed the unit in the CIA to track down Osama bin Laden. His comments were really about Iraq and its relationship to Afghanistan and what has happened as a result of the Bush policy, supported by the majority in this Congress, to the war on terror.

We are clearly losing today, Mr. Scheuer said. Today, bin Laden, al Qaeda and their allies have only one indispensable ally, the United States foreign policy towards the Islamic world.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, once again the gentleman from Maryland is so on point with his comments. I would like to read some remarks by former assistant Secretary of State James Rubin. He says that the Bush administration, that they have allowed Afghanistan to become the forgotten front on the war on terrorism, the forgotten front on the war on terrorism.

As the gentleman from Maryland pointed out, these were the individuals who took down the World Trade Center, who hit the Pentagon, and but for the bravery of the people on board that heroic flight, the other plane ended up in Pennsylvania, in the fields of Pennsylvania.

Afghanistan is the central front on the war on terror, and yet this administration does not have a long-term strategy for success in this crucial fight. They have allowed a war of choice in Iraq to distract from our critical mission in Afghanistan, a point the gentleman from Maryland articulated earlier.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I think Mr. Rubin is right on point on that very important issue, and I do think it is important to listen to what many of the experts in this area say.

The President claims that he keeps listening to the experts with respect to the decision made in Iraq and elsewhere. The interesting thing is many generals and other experts have said that Rumsfeld and others, the Secretary of Defense, in fact, ignored their advice.

But if you just go back to last March when the President took a visit to south Asia, he made a couple of stops. He stopped in Afghanistan, he stopped in India, he stopped in Pakistan. One of

the great ironies is that the very day he made a stop over in Afghanistan, General Maples, who is the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, was testifying before the United States Congress. In fact he was testifying over in front of the Senate and talking about the danger of the resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan.

Now, the President at that time was probably as close as he will ever get to Osama bin Laden. He was in Kabul, Afghanistan, going over to India and Pakistan; and yet, at the same time he has been talking about reducing in effect our commitment to Afghanistan in terms of our military presence, and this country has not yet made its financial commitments as well, but that very day General Maples was here testifying that, in fact, the continued presence of the active Taliban and al Qaeda resistance in Afghanistan was heating up and that the Taliban was coming back. He quoted many statistics. This was back in the spring. Since then things have only got worse.

Mr. DELAHUNT pointed to the USA Today article, the headline. There have been, unfortunately, many headlines in recent times about the resurgent Taliban.

We need to do better. This is where it all began September 11, and we need to remember the lessons of the past in Afghanistan. When the Soviets withdrew their forces from Afghanistan, the United States decided to say, well, we no longer have an interest there. We packed up our bags and left when the Soviets left, and what we left behind was a vacuum, a power vacuum; and it was that power vacuum that was exploited by the Taliban that then gave safe haven to al Qaeda, and it was al Qaeda then that launched the attacks of September 11.

So we would be making a gross mistake, not once but now twice, if we do not complete the mission in Afghanistan.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, the parallels of history are so important, and to think now as you point out so well that we have nearly abandoned the effort in Afghanistan and find ourselves imperiled in Iraq, much in the same way Russia found itself imperiled in Afghanistan, with the rest of the world watching as we continue to expend our resources, over \$400 billion, and our most precious of all resources, the men and women who serve this country; and in the meantime, Afghanistan has become the forgotten front on terrorism, something the gentleman from Maine knows about as well as anybody in this great body of ours, and I yield to him.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I took a trip to Kabul, to Bagram in Kabul, about a week after the invasion, a week or two after we invaded Afghanistan. I cannot tell you how proud I was of the men and women who are serving in our forces there, doing what they had to do in order to deal with that particular threat.

But Afghanistan, when we now read the books that have come out about how the administration rushed to war against Iraq, and how they essentially were planning a conflict in Iraq even before September 11 and how immediately after September 11 Secretary Rumsfeld was suggesting, find some evidence that Saddam Hussein was somehow connected so that we can attack Iraq as quickly as possible, it is very clear this administration was not living in the real world, the real world of evidence and information. They had a contempt for the State Department and for the expertise of those who had spent their entire lives in the Middle East.

So what they did was essentially, and this I think has to be laid particularly at the feet of Vice President CHENEY and Secretary Rumsfeld, they wanted to try out a new theory in Iraq, and that was to go in with a minimum amount of force, and basically go in, take out Saddam Hussein, and leave, with no thought given to what would be left, and now we know what was left.

I mean, people like Paul Wolfowitz, the Defense Secretary, who said to a congressional committee before the invasion, fortunately, Iraq has no history of ethnic conflict. Somebody who has studied Iraq for as many years as he had, ought to know better than to say that. They wanted to do the war. They had a war of choice. They chose it and they wanted to go, take out Saddam Hussein.

I just wanted to say a couple of things about where we go from here. We have had all sorts of debates in here, not a lot on the floor but a few debates, at least one debate one day, on where we go from here.

I think there is a case to be made for a draw-down this year and a withdrawal next year. The most important part of that case to me is we do not want the Iraqi politicians to be dependent on us. We want to put them under a timeline, some pressure to come to an agreement.

You read the press and you see some of the comments out of the administration. It sounds like major trickery that they were able, after 5½ months, to agree who would be the defense minister and who would be the interior minister. Well, they have got another issue in front of them: how are they going to divvy up the oil. That is a lot tougher than any decision that the Iraqi Government has made to date, and they are making it in the face of ongoing violence every day in Baghdad and other dangerous places in the country.

I think what we need to do is we need to refocus our attention on diplomatic solutions. We need to get people in other countries in the Middle East engaged, and we have to give the Iraqis a sense that we are not going to have permanent bases there and we are not going to stay, we are going to be drawing down our forces. The responsibility

rests on them to make the very tough political compromises that need to be made to give that country a chance, and that is all they have got now is a chance for some greater stability than they have today.

With that, I thank the gentleman for the yielding.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maine, as always, for his very thoughtful comments; and I want to make a statement consistent with what the gentlemen from Maryland and Massachusetts have said and ask the gentleman from Washington State to join us as well.

But clearly, as the gentleman from Maine points out, our continued presence in Iraq only helps to fuel the insurgency and prolong instability between Iraq's regional and sectarian factions. Instead, our Nation needs a new direction that redeploys our forces to win the war in Afghanistan, tracks down key al Qaeda leaders, and refocuses on fighting the war on terror, something the gentleman from Maryland articulated so well.

Instead, we get nonbinding resolutions that come to this floor when virtually this entire Chamber was united in the effort to make sure that we went after those criminals who perpetrated the acts of September 11, and instead, we have abandoned this front in Afghanistan. Astoundingly, as the gentleman from Maryland points out, the CIA is disbanding the unit that was focused on going after Osama bin Laden and allowed the Taliban to regroup in Afghanistan. Talk about cut and run. Where is the debate on this issue?

On the front line of terrorism, as Ms. WATERS pointed out, with what we know is a regrouping of the Taliban, and where we know the funding of terrorism comes from the source of opium trade and that it is allowed to flourish and, in fact, expand and grown since 2001, it is time for a change in policy.

With that, I will yield to the gentleman from Maryland for remarks and then we will go over to the gentleman from Washington State.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. I just wanted to point out that, as others have said, the diversion of resources from Afghanistan to Iraq is now clearly coming back to haunt us because we have not fulfilled the commitment that we made with respect to Afghanistan.

The other effect it has had, as the gentleman from Maine pointed out in his remarks just a minute ago, this was a decision that was really both discussed before September 11, but in the very moments after September 11, there was discussion of going after Saddam Hussein in Iraq, even though there was absolutely no evidence, and the President has admitted to this day that there was no evidence of any linkage between Saddam Hussein and Iraq and the terrible attacks of September 11.

The result of what we did was taking a situation where the world and international community that had rallied around us, it had passed resolutions at the United Nations and through NATO, and the world had joined us in this effort, and we lost that support. It evaporated, and it is not like we want to win some kind of popularity contest or to win a popularity contest, but we have recognized that we need the cooperation of other nations in terms of intelligence-gathering, in terms of support if we all want to be successful in combating terrorism.

The fact of the matter is, by going into Iraq, taking the lid off Pandora's box, unleashing historical forces that existed in Iraq between the Sunni and the Shiia and inflaming the Islamic world, we have certainly helped multiply the force of al Qaeda, both the organization itself, as well as the copycat organizations that have sprung up as a result. They sprung up when the Islamic world saw the United States making a war of choice and going into Iraq, when it became clear to the world that the twin pillars of our argument, the claim that there were weapons of mass destruction and the claim that there was a link between September 11 and al Qaeda was cooperating with Saddam Hussein, the twin pillars of our argument proved to be false.

□ 2130

And the world looked at us, and we made those claims before the United Nations. Secretary Powell, with great show of, you know, different charts and graphs and things that he displayed to the world, and the world looked at it and found out it was all untrue. And that fact helped fuel this resentment against the United States, which makes it more difficult for us to gain the cooperation of others in trying to fight terrorism around the world.

And so I think that we come here tonight saying the mission has not been accomplished. Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden remain where they are, and last week we learned that the CIA is dismantling the one unit that was dedicated to tracking down Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda.

Mr. DELAHUNT. If I may, before you yield to JIM McDERMOTT, I think it is important to follow what Congressman VAN HOLLEN just talked about in terms of the diversion of resources.

Several weeks ago, the foreign minister of Afghanistan came to this country and made a statement, and it was reported in the Washington Times, that the government forces, the security forces, the army and the police, are being outgunned and outmanned by the terrorists in Afghanistan.

In response the administration said, Well, we will double the assistance to the security forces. This is more than about 5 years, I daresay, since we invaded Afghanistan. This just simply goes to the point that in Iraq, with Katrina, with Afghanistan, with just about everything, we have seen a level

of incompetence and mismanagement that is simply mind-boggling.

Last week, they are talking about increasing military assistance to the security forces in Afghanistan. In the meantime, it is going very badly in Afghanistan.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. The gentleman from Washington State.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Thank you, Mr. LARSON. I think that people may wonder why some of us come out here and talk about this week after week. It really has to do with the feeling of having seen this story once before.

And when you know what it is to commit people to battle. I had to say, this person is fit for active duty and goes to war in Vietnam. I had to do that again and again and again. So I know what the weight is of doing that.

When you ask, why are the generals coming out and talking about what is going on in this whole thing? Why do people who have been loyal to this country and have served for long, distinguished careers, now stand up and say about the management of this war, as General Newbold did on April 9th of this year, he said, My sincere view is that the commitment of our forces to this fight was done with the casualness and the swagger that are the special privilege of those who have never had to execute these missions or bury the results.

And it is incredible that we stand out here today, 120 days from election, being subjected to a propaganda war that things are getting better. In spite of bombings and people dying and our soldiers continuing to be killed, the administration says, We have to stay the course.

Now, if you look around the world, you would think maybe, well, maybe it is just some antiwar Americans. Right? No. In yesterday's Guardian, or the July 5 Guardian, there was an article my Menzies Campbell. He is the leader of the Liberal Democrats in the British House of Commons. And he said, the British and American Governments have tried to pretend things are getting better in Iraq. They are wrong. The facts belie their optimism. Between 2004 and 2005, the number of car and roadside bombs doubled and the suicide bombs trebled. Electricity supplies and oil production are still below prewar levels. Iraq stands on the threshold of a civil war.

Now, here is a leader in Britain saying exactly what we are saying. They have got troops on the ground. They are committed in support. But, in fact, they are becoming very antsy. Mr. CAMPBELL comes up with a six-point plan to get out of Iraq. It is things that we have talked about right here in this room.

He talks about a comprehensive U.N.-led disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategy as necessary to make a reality of the Iraqi prime minister's policies that the militias must merge with the national security forces.

We all know this cannot be a government that has militias running it. It becomes warlords. It becomes like Afghanistan. It is the same thing. He also says there needs to be an end to the systematic, indefinite detentions by U.S. and Iraqi forces.

Today, there are 30,000 Iraqis held in more or less permanent detention, whether it be in Guantanamo or Abu Ghraib or wherever. And as long as we continue to do that, we are occupiers. There is no question about it. And the plan which Mr. Menzies Campbell puts forward, or the one that we put forward, there are reasonable ways to get out of this. But we must get out of Iraq if we are ever going to deal with the problems you talk about in Afghanistan.

We cannot fight on two fronts. We have proven that. We left Afghanistan to go to Iraq, and the mess came right back up. And if we are serious about dealing with whatever kind of terrorism was being created in Afghanistan, we have got to go back and finish that job.

Now, Menzies Campbell finishes by saying, you could change the words a little bit, but it would be the very same thing. With distressing regularity, the Commons, or the Congress, pays tribute to the brave men and women who have given their lives in Iraq.

If the government cannot explain why this is necessary, that they should make this ultimate sacrifice, then it must be prepared to bring them home. And that is where we are today. We have a government that wants to get through 120 days, and I will make a prediction for you. Right there, the prime minister of Iraq, Mr. Maliki, is going to come in here in the next month, and he is going to stand up there and plead with us to leave our troops in Iraq.

We have seen that kind of stuff already in this House. And you can bet that the PR from that will be to stimulate people to say, oh, gee, if we stayed just another 3 months or another 4 months or whatever. We have been there since 2002, 4 years, and this is what you have as the analysis by people who know what they are talking about.

[From the Guardian, July 5, 2006]

ONLY A U.N.-LED PEACE PROCESS CAN HALT THE IRAQ CATASTROPHE—THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT JUSTIFY THE CONTINUING PRESENCE OF OUR TROOPS UNLESS IT SHOWS IT HAS LEARNED FROM ITS FAILURES

(By Menzies Campbell)

The British and American governments like to pretend that things are getting better in Iraq. They are wrong. The facts belie their optimism. Between 2004 and 2005 the number of car and roadside bombs doubled, and suicide bombs trebled. Electricity supplies and oil production are still below prewar levels. Iraq stands on the threshold of civil war. The illegal invasion, launched on a flawed prospectus and with little understanding of the consequences, has resulted in the deaths of about 3,000 coalition soldiers, 40,000 civilians and many U.N. and humanitarian workers.

Since 2003 the coalition has met neither its obligations nor its objectives. There was a

catastrophic failure to plan for postwar Iraq, followed by misjudgment and incompetence. This has been overlaid by a disproportionate use of military force, including gross human rights abuses. There are nearly 30,000 people being held without trial in Iraq. These failures and misjudgments have perpetuated the insurgency, increased corruption and criminality, and inhibited improvements to the lives of Iraqis. We must now face the possibility that Iraq could become a failed state. That would have devastating economic and security consequences for the region, and would risk taking the current humanitarian disaster to a completely new level.

The catalogue of errors means the capacity of the UK and the U.S. to play a positive role in redeeming the situation is severely diminished. The legitimacy of the coalition, always questionable, is now simply not accepted by most Iraqis. A 2005 poll for the British Ministry of Defense found that eight out of 10 Iraqis strongly opposed the presence of coalition forces. Between 70 percent–90 percent want to see a timeline for the withdrawal of coalition troops.

Faced with this reality, the British and American governments seem to be in denial. The last time the British government allotted parliamentary time for a full debate on Iraq was July 20 2004, which was only the second occasion since March 18 2003. It appears to be running scared of critical evaluation. The coalition does not have an exit strategy, nor does it have a strategy for staying. But to continue as it has been is not a credible option. The British and U.S. governments require a coherent stabilisation and exit strategy. The early moves by Iraq's government of national unity to form a reconciliation plan are positive, but vague on detail.

The foundation of a new strategy should be a peace process led by the U.N. to accelerate national reconciliation and the internationalisation of support for Iraq. If the problems of internecine conflict within Iraq have international dimensions, so too must the solutions. A new strategy would seek to build on the policies set out by the Iraqi prime minister and work towards an international "compact", similar to that agreed with Afghanistan, setting out the commitments of all sides and a comprehensive security and reconstruction strategy.

Only an international solution can shore up the legitimacy and effectiveness of Iraq's government, improve the delivery of essential services and facilitate the end of the militarisation. Every further association with the U.S. and the UK taints the Iraqi administration.

What should that solution contain? First, establishing a regional contact group would strengthen the engagement of Iraq's neighbours, and require them to play a constructive role in reconstruction. A contact group could play a significant role in talking to insurgent groups, improving border controls and promoting economic stability.

Second, enhanced measures to train, equip and professionalise Iraqi security forces are needed to de-politicise them and improve security. Coalition forces should move towards training, advising and equipping. Third, a comprehensive, U.N.-led disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration strategy is necessary to make a reality of the Iraqi prime minister's policy that the militias must merge with the national security forces.

Fourth, there should be an end to systematic indefinite detentions by Iraqi and U.S. forces, and full access should be granted to U.N. human rights monitors and the Red Cross. Fifth, the reconstruction process must be expedited and legitimised (60 percent of Iraqis believe the U.N. should have the lead role). Increasing UNDP and the World Bank

involvement would enhance transparency and accountability. Donors must play their part and deliver on their aid pledges.

Sixth, Iraq needs a programme for phased security transfer and withdrawal of coalition troops. The Iraqis view them as occupiers. A limited British withdrawal is taking place but U.S. troops are redeploying in other parts of the country. The UK should aim to achieve a series of withdrawals, in parallel with the U.S., according to milestones in the stabilisation and reconstruction process. A transparent agreement with the Iraqi administration would help to counter the perception of occupation and illegitimacy.

I have been supportive of British efforts to bring stability to Iraq. But, support for the government cannot be unconditional. Unless it shows that it has learned from its failures and is ready to look afresh at the way out of the Iraqi quagmire, it will be impossible to justify the continuing presence of British forces in Iraq. With distressing regularity, the Commons pays tribute to the brave men and women who have lost their lives in Iraq. If the government cannot explain why it is necessary that they should make the ultimate sacrifice, then it must be prepared to bring them home.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I know we all remember when President Bush made that surprise visit to Baghdad to meet with the Iraqi leaders. And on the way back, he was on Air Force One, and he brought some reporters in. He had this to say about his conversations with the Iraqi leaders:

There are concerns about our commitment in keeping our troops there. They are worried, almost to a person, that we will leave them before they are capable of defending themselves. And I assured them they did not need to worry.

But I guess when he is referring to just, I think his words were, "almost to a person," he did not mention that the Vice President of Iraq came to him and said, please, Mr. President, would you provide a time line for the withdrawal of American troops, the clear inference being, until you leave, we are not going to be able to resolve the issues because you are fueling this violence by your presence.

What was interesting was that the President of Iraq, the Kurdish leader Talabani, corroborated this request by his Vice President and said that he supported it. They want us out.

Those that want Americans soldiers there, I would suggest to you, have a motive that is dark, because they realize that with the presence of American troops, they have an excuse, they have an excuse to commit violence. They have a rationale to inflame passion. And what is the result? We have seen it over the course of this weekend and today with hundreds being executed, murdered, in a situation that is clearly a civil war.

We hear terms like low-grade civil war. I guess that is something like being a little bit pregnant. I mean, it is just simply—

Mr. McDERMOTT. To the 40,000 people who died there.

Mr. DELAHUNT. 50,000 civilians who have died.

So my point is, to go back to where we began, all of us want to win against

terrorism, which we can agree is scourged. However, the rest of the world—there was another poll that was taken; 34 out of 35 countries, this was commissioned by the BBC, and this poll found that in 34 out of 35 of those countries more people believed, 60 percent believed that the war in Iraq increased terrorism, and 15 percent disagreed and said it impacted terrorism and led to a decline. Sixteen percent to 15 percent, and yet this administration, this Republican leadership, is tone deaf to that.

I am convinced we all, everyone in this Chamber, everyone in this government wants to defeat terrorism. It is just they do not know how to do it.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. The gentleman from Washington State makes a very good point when he says, as the viewers all across this country tune in, and they see people coming down to this floor and speaking from their hearts and their heads about the situation we find in here, the one thing we want the people of this country to know is that the main purpose that we come down to this floor is because of love of country.

The gentleman from Washington State loves his country, as do the gentlemen from Massachusetts and Maryland. And yet we found ourselves in this situation here where oftentimes our voices are muffled. We do not get an opportunity, even in a nonbinding resolution, to present our alternative point of view. This is a one-party town where the other side of the aisle, our erstwhile Republican colleagues, control the Presidency and all of its agencies and both Houses of these Chambers.

And it is because of love of country and a concern to make sure, as we said from the outset, that we distinguish the warrior from the war, that we have an obligation to come to the floor and speak truth to power.

That is why I commend all of you for coming down to the floor, as you have since the outset of this war. And again pointing out this evening that we need a new direction, a thoughtful, provocative direction that all of you have expressed this evening. Articulated by the gentlemen from Maryland and Maine and Massachusetts and Washington is the sense that the American people intuitively understand this and are yearning for their Nation to leave. But our inability in the minority to break through causes us to come here evening after evening in the hope, in the silence of this great hall, in this great room, that our message reaches out across this Nation and is heard by people who love this country.

Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle love their country as well. But our patriotism and our belief in this Nation stem from the fact that we are a nation configured through the rule of law.

And that is why I am so proud to stand here with each and every one of you this evening. Thank you so much for again coming out for Iraq Watch.

□ 2145

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, once again it is an honor to come to the floor; and hearing Mr. LARSON, who is our vice chair of the Democratic Caucus, make his closing in the last hour was definitely uplifting and very true. And I want to thank him and other gentlemen who are here on the floor sharing what should be happening in Iraq and what is not happening in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, that is the good thing about this great democracy of ours, that we can come to the floor even though we don't have the right to bring many bills to the floor that we have stuck in committee or ideas that we can bring to the floor that would balance the budget or provide health care for Americans and allow small businesses to provide health care for the people that work for them and with them.

As you know, the 30-something Working Group, Mr. Speaker, has been coming to the floor for the last 3 years sharing with Americans and also with the Members of the House initiatives and plans and opportunity for recovery. Many of those plans are still stuck in committee or stuck in legislation, Mr. LARSON and other gentlemen that are here, that we have not been able to bring to the floor, and this is the only way that we have an opportunity to share with the Members and also the American people about our plans and about the initiatives that we have that will bring about real energy policy, real prescription drug policy, real health care policy, and real policy on Iraq, and on and on and on.

So we look forward. And I am happy, Mr. LARSON, that the American people, the majority, well, a good majority of the American people believe in what we believe in: making sure that we do right by those that punch in and punch out every day by raising the minimum wage, by doing a number of things that you just finished talking about and the things that we are going to talk about in the 30-something Working Group.

I will yield to you.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. I want to thank you and the 30-something Group for the enormous work that you have done on this floor. Again, as you rightfully point out, we do not have and are not provided the opportunity. You would think in this great democracy of ours there would be ample opportunity for these issues to be debated, but unfortunately time and time again we are not allowed the opportunity even to provide a countervailing measure on something as important as Iraq. Or we find the Voting Rights Act all of a sudden mysteriously is shunted off the floor. The Voting Rights Act,

something where there is near bipartisan, almost unanimous approval that is worked out. And you would think in the spirit of this great Chamber that we would be able to proceed. But unfortunately, as I said before, this is a one-party town. And when the Republicans control the House of Representatives, as they have for the last 12 years, and the United States Senate and the Presidency, in their arrogance they believe I guess that we shouldn't have a say, that there shouldn't be this discourse and dialogue.

And that is why I am so proud of the 30-something Group that has consistently come down to this floor. And I am proud to say also that so many people in my home State of Connecticut have called and written and said that they have heard you. And your message is getting through. And I commend you as well for linking up with a number of the blogs around the country who tune in on a regular basis so that they get an opportunity to hear from you and Mr. RYAN and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and the way that you are able to articulate these issues.

I see that we have been joined by the gentlewoman from Texas, Ms. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE, another individual who has been able to on so many occasions come to this floor in the silence of this Chamber, in the din of the night because we are not allowed the opportunity during the day to express our concerns.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. LARSON, some of the best work is done at night, and I can tell you that many of us that are in the minority here in this House, we have come to the floor, we have carved a plan for not only the House to deal with a number of issues that have faced us in the last recent years; we have tried to head off a number of the issues that we are facing now as it relates to record borrowing from foreign nations, we have tried to head off the largest borrowing surge in the history of the country by the Republican majority by saying pay as you go, Mr. Speaker. We have tried to head off a lack of leadership as relates to accountability in Louisiana and Mississippi and Alabama as it relates to Hurricane Katrina, and a lot of or all of the money that is being stolen from the taxpayers.

We have tried to bring about, Mr. Speaker, the kind of accountability that the Government Accounting Office has investigated and shown that a number of Federal agencies are overspending, they are not able to even give us an idea of where the money went. And we are talking about billions of dollars.

Folks talk about wasteful spending. I think it is important, Mr. DELAHUNT, to even talk about what the Republican majority has not done as it relates to oversight, has not done as relates to subpoenaing a number of individuals that some of this stuff in my opinion, Mr. LARSON, is close to being jailable. And I think when we look,