

bold, to change course in Iraq and having our main goal be that of bringing our troops home.

Yet there remains a debate within this Congress on what it means to oppose the war. There are some who claim to oppose it, even while arguing that we cannot bring our troops home right away, that to do so would be catastrophic. But how could it get more catastrophic than fueling a devastating, homegrown insurgency in Iraq? The catastrophe is continuing to foment a civil war, a war that is tearing a proud nation apart at the seams.

This current policy is the catastrophe. Staying the course at this point will only plunge Iraq further into the abyss, costing thousands more American and Iraqi lives.

There are others who claim that while they oppose the war, they support the troops, and, they say, supporting a withdrawal would dishonor them. But is it honoring these brave men and women, some of the best America has to offer, to leave them in a dangerous, unwinnable situation? No. Honoring them means bringing them home to their families and strengthening a Veterans Administration health care system that has been all but laid to waste by the Bush administration in recent years.

Every day that we remain in Iraq is a day that we shortchange our priorities right here at home. This occupation has already cost over \$300 billion, approximately \$11 million every hour of every day, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. The total cost is now projected to surpass the cost of the entire Vietnam war.

This is an astronomical, irresponsible sum, a sum that would be better used here at home to improve our schools, provide quality health care, put Americans back to work and help Iraq rebuild its economy and its infrastructure.

In January of 2005, I came down here to the floor of the United States House of Representatives and, as the first Member of Congress, demanded that the President put together a plan to bring our troops home. Since then I have followed up with public forums, resolutions, forced votes and these nightly speeches, which tonight makes 181, all designed to build support for a movement to end the occupation.

Many times along the way, and going as far back as 2002, when we first debated the Iraq invasion, the right wing and their media mouthpieces greeted me and other antiwar leaders with the usual smears and jeers. But who will history judge as calling this one correctly?

Everyone but the blindest Bush-Cheney loyalist recognizes that Iraq has been an unmitigated disaster, a strategic blunder and moral failing of historic proportions.

Today, because of the pressure applied by the anti-war camp, I stand with the majority of the American public and with a growing number of elected leaders from both parties in opposing this occupation.

We were right in 2002, and we are still right—withdrawing our troops is the only humane, sensible option we have left.

Congress has the power to end this occupation. We must stand up to our responsibility and bring every pressure to bear on this administration. We must use every lever and pursue any avenue to hold them accountable for their immeasurable failures in Iraq.

This is not just another priority for the new Congress. According to the voters who have elected us, this is the 110th Congress' most solemn duty.

That is why last week, along with 25 of my colleagues, I introduced the "Bring the Troops Home and Iraq Sovereignty Restoration Act." This is the only comprehensive bill that will provide for a safe return of our troops, strengthen Iraqi institutions and provide for our veterans.

I urge my colleagues to cosponsor H.R. 508 today and to send a clear message to our President that—in absence of a real plan from him—Congress is ready to bring our troops home.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. FOXX addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

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

STRATEGY FOR IRAQ

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

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, last night the President reiterated his plans to send more troops to Iraq, despite bipartisan opposition in Congress and the opposition of most Americans.

Iraq is in a civil war. The violence that plagues Iraq is increasing, and our troops are caught in the middle of Iraqi sectarian violence. We have lost 3,032 of our brave men and women in this war.

Mr. Speaker and Members, despite the fact that the President talks about his surge, or what we know it to be, an expansion, we have to remember, these are not new boots on the ground. These tours are being extended. These tours are being extended, and some of our men and women in the military are being asked to extend their tours two and three times. They are also shortening the length of time that these soldiers have at home. Many of them, who have been on two tours and expect to go home and spend a little time with their families, are being told, no, you won't be able to spend the time that you thought you were going to be able to spend. You have got to come back

after having been home a shorter period of time. Even the National Guard. They are now eliminating the limitations on how many times they can be called up for Active Duty. So these are not new boots on the ground.

As the Iraq Study Group noted in its report, "Attacks against U.S. coalition and Iraqi security forces are persistent and growing. Total attacks in October 2006 averaged 180 per day, up from 70 per day in January 2006. Daily attacks against Iraqi security forces in October were more than double the level in January. Attacks against civilians in October were four times higher than in January. Some 3,000 Iraqi civilians are killed every month."

The United Nations estimated that more than 34,000 civilians were violently killed across Iraq in 2006, with an average of 94 killed every day.

The U.S. Department of Defense claims that the number of Iraqis that are trained and equipped is increasing each month. In fact, they claim that there are almost 300,000 Iraqis trained.

However, our troops are in a difficult situation, and they cannot trust many of those who serve in Iraq's security forces. For example, American troops often complain that Iraqi police and soldiers tip off the targets of raids ahead of time. American troops also say that Iraqis flee during some of the security operations. It is also reported that the Iraqi desertion rate is high among those who serve in Iraqi security forces. Sending more U.S. troops to Iraq will only put more of them at risk.

Mr. Speaker, and Members, I am worried. I am worried that our Nation, our Commander in Chief is on the path to confrontation with al-Sadr and al-Sadr City, and I believe that this is going to be disastrous.

First of all, I don't trust Maliki, who is friends with al-Sadr. Remember when the President of the United States went to Jordan to meet with Maliki, he was stopped from going into that meeting by al-Sadr. He finally did meet before he left Jordan, but that was an exercise of power by al-Sadr. And I don't want this confrontation.

There are over 50,000 Iraqis in that militia, and I don't want our soldiers, with so-called Iraqi soldiers working with them, fighting with us, who may desert them, who may tip them off, to confront this militia. I want our soldiers out of there before it happens.

On Saturday, I will be marching with Representative LYNN WOOLSEY and thousands of other Americans who want to end this war and bring our troops home. The rally that is going to be held here in Washington, D.C., will attract millions, and we will send a clear message to President Bush and his administration that we have had enough. It is time to bring our troops home, and it is time to use diplomacy to stabilize Iraq and the Middle East region.

Mr. Speaker, and Members, we have Members of Congress who voted to support the Commander in Chief. They

voted to go into this war. But many of them are saying to us today, if they had known then what they know now, they never would have taken that vote to send our troops into that war.

Of course, we don't have to say it, but we must remind people over and over again, there were no weapons of mass destruction. There was no reason for us to go into Iraq. We have destabilized Iraq. We are destabilizing the entire Middle East, and we cannot win with this strategy that the President has employed.

And I would simply say to my colleagues, please do everything you can to help get us out.

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

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

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

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

IRAQ

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

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker. Last night I watched the State of the Union Address in this hall for the first time as a Member of Congress. While I found the pageantry inspiring, I wish I could say the same about the speech itself.

We heard another attempt to allay with hollow rhetoric the concerns of an alarmed Nation about the war in Iraq. And rather than seizing an opportunity to level with the American people and set the new course they rightly demand, the administration, once again, chose to cling to its delusions and insist that its failing policies be enacted.

In 2003, the administration requested and received from Congress authority to invade Iraq on the basis of the claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and presented an imminent threat to our national security. Senior administration officials claimed that the Iraqi Government was connected with the al Qaeda terrorists who perpetrated the attacks of September 11, 2001. And we now know that neither the

premise for the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq nor the claim of a connection to 9/11 was true.

After the fall of Baghdad, the administration sent in officials with little or no knowledge and understanding of Iraq, its people, its culture or its politics. Costly mistakes, including the dismantling of the army and the failure to secure weapons stockpiles, paved the way for the current situation in Iraq: More than \$450 billion spent with billions unaccounted for; an undependable Iraqi Government, unwilling or incapable of controlling warring sects in their militias; more than 3,000 American deaths, and more than 25,000 soldiers maimed or grievously wounded; hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians killed, wounded or driven from their homes by sectarian violence; and a profound loss of respect for our country in the region and around the world.

All in all, it constitutes an unparalleled foreign policy disaster for the United States.

The administration still has no plans for a responsible exit strategy to protect our security. And unbelievably, the administration wants to send an additional 21,000 troops to Iraq.

The proposal is a cavalier rejection of the sound views of the American people, the consensus of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, and the counsel of wise military commanders.

In a city of some 7 million people, and without a unified government or the infrastructure to provide jobs to an ever more agitated population, an injection of 20,000 troops will not succeed. It can only stoke the flames of chaos and bloodshed in Iraq.

Our national strategic interests, Mr. Speaker, require a change of course, not an escalation. The imperative to support our troops requires a change of course, not an escalation.

Last year the Republican-controlled House declared in the defense authorization bill that 2006 would be a year of transition to Iraqi control of Iraq, and that redeployment would begin at that point. Yet here we are in 2007 with the administration calling for an escalation supported by many in this body.

In my judgment, Mr. Speaker, the time has come and gone for this Congress to say "enough is enough." The time has come and gone for statements of concern. The time has come and gone for "trust but verify." The situation in Iraq is dire.

It is now time for this Congress to do what the American people said so clearly in November that they wanted us to do: Change the course in Iraq. We have a saying in my home State in New Hampshire, "When you're in a hole, stop digging."

Mr. Speaker, I support our valiant troops, and I oppose the administration's proposed escalation. I resolve to work with my colleagues over the coming weeks for a concrete new direction in Iraq. In the absence of an acceptable plan from the President, the American people are calling upon Congress to

lead the way. Popular demand for new direction in Iraq is, in large part, the reason I am here in Washington and the reason Democrats now hold the majority.

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We can no longer accept empty promises from the administration or hope the administration will honestly confront the reality of its failures. The American people are looking to this Congress for leadership. They are impatient. And we must and we will respond.

CONGRESS SHOULD DUST OFF OVERSIGHT PLAN FROM 30 YEARS AGO

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, in December 2005, we learned that the Bush administration was using the National Security Agency, the NSA, to eavesdrop on Americans on U.S. soil without a warrant or judicial oversight, in violation of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

Over a year later, Congress has yet to address this issue, and the NSA's secret surveillance program has continued unabated. Just last week the administration continued its unilateral approach, announcing that notwithstanding its protestations last year, that it could not possibly allow the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court to oversee the NSA program; it would now submit to the court's jurisdiction, but not tell the Congress how the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court would oversee the program or why its policies have changed.

When Members of Congress questioned the Attorney General and the National Intelligence Director regarding this shift in policy, both officials refused to provide information regarding the nature of the administration's new policy in this area.

Indeed, we have no idea whether the administration is now seeking warrants on an individualized basis or broad programmatic approval from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.

Congressional silence in this area and others has had other repercussions. Earlier this month Congress was again caught by surprise when we learned that the President has claimed potentially sweeping new powers to open Americans' mail without a court warrant.

Again, the administration could obtain a warrant, and quickly, from a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court judge, but has chosen not to submit this effort to court supervision. Interestingly, the developments over the last year bear a striking resemblance to events that occurred some 30 years ago, when a series of troubling reports