



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 158

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2012

No. 21

Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 9, 2012, at 9:30 a.m.

House of Representatives

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2012

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WEBSTER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 8, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DANIEL WEBSTER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 17, 2012, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

AFGHANISTAN: AMERICA NEEDS THE TRUTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, Congress and the American people need to

hear the truth about Afghanistan. It is impossible for us to make thoughtful, rational decisions on policy if we do not receive straight, accurate information about the situation on the ground. And we have no right to keep our brave service men and women in harm's way day after day, week after week, based on a steady diet of rosy statements that tell us everything is going well, progress is being made, conditions are improving, and victory is at hand.

On January 18, I had the privilege of sitting down with U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Davis for a special briefing on his assessment of the situation on the ground in Afghanistan. He had recently submitted reports in both classified and unclassified versions to his superiors at the Pentagon. I was joined at that briefing by my colleagues Congressman WALTER JONES and JOHN GARAMENDI, and we were not only impressed with Lieutenant Colonel Davis' character, but the information and analysis he shared with us. Simply put, the situation in Afghanistan does not reflect the optimistic statements we repeatedly hear from high military officials and commanders on a regular basis.

This week, a great deal of what Lieutenant Colonel Davis told us has appeared in the media in an article he wrote for the Armed Forces Journal, the Nation's oldest independent military magazine, and in The New York Times.

Lieutenant Colonel Davis talks about the difficulties of training the Afghan police and military, the challenges facing our own troops to establish sus-

tainable security zones, the rampant corruption, and the great discrepancy between the military's positive public statements and the classified material that contradicts such claims.

The briefing with Danny Davis comes close on the heels of a number of articles that appeared toward the end of last year about the more pessimistic conclusions found in the most recent National Intelligence Estimate on Afghanistan.

According to the press, the current NIE on Afghanistan recognizes that U.S. policy has not achieved the objectives outlined by the President; that instead it casts doubt on official assertions of progress made by the U.S. Government and military leaders. No one likes to hear bad news, Mr. Speaker, but we do need to hear the unvarnished truth. We need accurate information in order to get a genuine understanding of what the situation is like on the ground in Afghanistan. We need to know the very real challenges faced by our troops and our diplomatic, development, and humanitarian workers every day.

As Lieutenant Colonel Davis asserts, the amount of unclassified information available to the American people, the media, and public officials continues to shrink. Ironically, one week before being briefed by Davis, Congressman WALTER JONES and I sent a letter on January 12 to the President asking him to declassify and release the 2011 NIE in Afghanistan. We are still waiting for a response to that request.

Mr. Speaker, the U.S. has spent hundreds of billions of dollars on military

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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operations in Afghanistan. Over 5,500 Americans were wounded or killed in Afghanistan last year alone. Over the course of a decade, tens of thousands have come home. Many will carry for a lifetime the unseen scars of post-traumatic stress or traumatic brain injury. Like soldiers everywhere, they face a callous and unsympathetic battlefield. They do what is expected of them, and they do it with courage and determination.

As my colleagues know, the majority of Americans want a safe and orderly withdrawal from Afghanistan as quickly as possible. I want every single one of our troops home and reunited with their families and loved ones as soon as humanly possible. I want them to be able to leave safely and in a manner that generates confidence in what the next day will bring for Afghanistan and the region.

On February 1, the administration announced that it will end U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan at the end of next year. This is welcome news. To ensure that timeline is met and to ensure that our policies and priorities pave the way for a successful transition, we need to know now what the real conditions are on the ground. We can only do that with a clear-eyed, hard-eyed assessment of what is going on in Afghanistan.

An unclassified version of Lieutenant Colonel Davis' report can be found at www.Afghanreport.com. I encourage all my House colleagues to read it. I encourage them to meet with Lieutenant Colonel Davis for a briefing. I urge my House colleagues to ask the President to declassify the 2011 NIE on Afghanistan. And I ask the Pentagon public affairs office to stop stalling and formally approve the release of Lieutenant Colonel Danny Davis' unclassified report.

Mr. Speaker, the Congress and the people of this country deserve more than a whitewash. Too often over the last decade we have been misled about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Too often Congress has made decisions based on false information, and too many of our brave service men and women have lost their lives. This must change. America needs and deserves the truth.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, January 12, 2012.

Hon. BARACK OBAMA,
President of the United States,
The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: Recent media reports have detailed that the current National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Afghanistan recognizes that U.S. policy has not achieved the objectives you have stated for our nation in Afghanistan. Similar reports were published concerning the 2010 NIE. These reports reinforce outside, independent assessments of the Afghan war and cast doubt on official assertions of progress by the U.S. government and military.

Outside of official public statements by U.S. officials, there seems to be near universal recognition that the situation in Afghanistan over the last several years has deteriorated significantly. We are conscious of

and sympathetic to the timing of a debate on the Afghan War during an election year. However, as you are aware, the majority of Americans continue to favor an accelerated withdrawal of American troops from the midst of what they rightly recognize as a civil war internal to Afghanistan, one devoid of significant or meaningful al-Qaeda participation.

In order to facilitate an honest understanding of America's involvement in Afghanistan we request that you authorize the declassification and release of the 2011 National Intelligence Estimate on Afghanistan. There are historical precedents for the declassification and release of NIEs. Tragically, there are also historical precedents for inaccurate and misleading public assertions of progress in war by those opposed to bringing military actions to a close. It is haunting in the face of the enormous expenditure of American lives, limbs and resources that progress in Afghanistan may, in fact, be something other than is being represented by those who advocate continued involvement.

The American public and its elected representatives deserve to have a full understanding of the situation in and outlook for Afghanistan as understood by our government. Too many families of our service members are sacrificing too greatly to allow for anything else.

Respectfully,

JAMES P. MCGOVERN,
Member of Congress.
WALTER B. JONES,
Member of Congress.

[From the Armed Forces Journal, Feb. 6, 2012]

TRUTH, LIES AND AFGHANISTAN
HOW MILITARY LEADERS HAVE LET US DOWN
(By Lt. Col. Daniel L. Davis)

I spent last year in Afghanistan, visiting and talking with U.S. troops and their Afghan partners. My duties with the Army's Rapid Equipping Force took me into every significant area where our soldiers engage the enemy. Over the course of 12 months, I covered more than 9,000 miles and talked, traveled and patrolled with troops in Kandahar, Kunar, Ghazni, Khost, Paktika, Kunduz, Balkh, Nangarhar and other provinces.

What I saw bore no resemblance to rosy official statements by U.S. military leaders about conditions on the ground.

Entering this deployment, I was sincerely hoping to learn that the claims were true: that conditions in Afghanistan were improving, that the local government and military were progressing toward self-sufficiency. I did not need to witness dramatic improvements to be reassured, but merely hoped to see evidence of positive trends, to see companies or battalions produce even minimal but sustainable progress.

Instead, I witnessed the absence of success on virtually every level.

My arrival in country in late 2010 marked the start of my fourth combat deployment, and my second in Afghanistan. A Regular Army officer in the Armor Branch, I served in Operation Desert Storm, in Afghanistan in 2005-06 and in Iraq in 2008-09. In the middle of my career, I spent eight years in the U.S. Army Reserve and held a number of civilian jobs—among them, legislative correspondent for defense and foreign affairs for Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas.

As a representative for the Rapid Equipping Force, I set out to talk to our troops about their needs and their circumstances. Along the way, I conducted mounted and dismounted combat patrols, spending time with conventional and Special Forces troops. I interviewed or had conversations with more

than 250 soldiers in the field, from the lowest-ranking 19-year-old private to division commanders and staff members at every echelon. I spoke at length with Afghan security officials, Afghan civilians and a few village elders.

I saw the incredible difficulties any military force would have to pacify even a single area of any of those provinces; I heard many stories of how insurgents controlled virtually every piece of land beyond eyeshot of a U.S. or International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) base.

I saw little to no evidence the local governments were able to provide for the basic needs of the people. Some of the Afghan civilians I talked with said the people didn't want to be connected to a predatory or incapable local government.

From time to time, I observed Afghan Security forces collude with the insurgency.

FROM BAD TO ABYSMAL

Much of what I saw during my deployment, let alone read or wrote in official reports, I can't talk about; the information remains classified. But I can say that such reports—mine and others—serve to illuminate the gulf between conditions on the ground and official statements of progress.

And I can relate a few representative experiences, of the kind that I observed all over the country.

In January 2011, I made my first trip into the mountains of Kunar province near the Pakistan border to visit the troops of 1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry. On a patrol to the northernmost U.S. position in eastern Afghanistan, we arrived at an Afghan National Police (ANP) station that had reported being attacked by the Taliban 2½ hours earlier.

Through the interpreter, I asked the police captain where the attack had originated, and he pointed to the side of a nearby mountain.

"What are your normal procedures in situations like these?" I asked. "Do you form up a squad and go after them? Do you periodically send out harassing patrols? What do you do?"

As the interpreter conveyed my questions, the captain's head wheeled around, looking first at the interpreter and turning to me with an incredulous expression. Then he laughed.

"No! We don't go after them," he said. "That would be dangerous!"

According to the cavalry troopers, the Afghan policemen rarely leave the cover of the checkpoints. In that part of the province, the Taliban literally run free.

In June, I was in the Zharay district of Kandahar province, returning to a base from a dismounted patrol. Gunshots were audible as the Taliban attacked a U.S. checkpoint about one mile away.

As I entered the unit's command post, the commander and his staff were watching a live video feed of the battle. Two ANP vehicles were blocking the main road leading to the site of the attack. The fire was coming from behind a haystack. We watched as two Afghan men emerged, mounted a motorcycle and began moving toward the Afghan policemen in their vehicles.

The U.S. commander turned around and told the Afghan radio operator to make sure the policemen halted the men. The radio operator shouted into the radio repeatedly, but got no answer.

On the screen, we watched as the two men slowly motored past the ANP vehicles. The policemen neither got out to stop the two men nor answered the radio—until the motorcycle was out of sight.

To a man, the U.S. officers in that unit told me they had nothing but contempt for the Afghan troops in their area—and that was before the above incident occurred.

In August, I went on a dismounted patrol with troops in the Panjwai district of Kandahar province. Several troops from the unit had recently been killed in action, one of whom was a very popular and experienced soldier. One of the unit's senior officers rhetorically asked me, "How do I look these men in the eye and ask them to go out day after day on these missions? What's harder: How do I look [my soldier's] wife in the eye when I get back and tell her that her husband died for something meaningful? How do I do that?"

One of the senior enlisted leaders added, "Guys are saying, 'I hope I live so I can at least get home to R&R leave before I get it,' or 'I hope I only lose a foot.' Sometimes they even say which limb it might be: 'Maybe it'll only be my left foot.' They don't have a lot of confidence that the leadership two levels up really understands what they're living here, what the situation really is."

On Sept. 11, the 10th anniversary of the infamous attack on the U.S., I visited another unit in Kunar province, this one near the town of Asmar. I talked with the local official who served as the cultural adviser to the U.S. commander. Here's how the conversation went:

Davis: "Here you have many units of the Afghan National Security Forces [ANSF]. Will they be able to hold out against the Taliban when U.S. troops leave this area?"

Adviser: "No. They are definitely not capable. Already all across this region [many elements of] the security forces have made deals with the Taliban. [The ANSF] won't shoot at the Taliban, and the Taliban won't shoot them."

"Also, when a Taliban member is arrested, he is soon released with no action taken against him. So when the Taliban returns [when the Americans leave after 2014], so too go the jobs, especially for everyone like me who has worked with the coalition."

"Recently, I got a cellphone call from a Talib who had captured a friend of mine. While I could hear, he began to beat him, telling me I'd better quit working for the Americans. I could hear my friend crying out in pain. [The Talib] said the next time they would kidnap my sons and do the same to them. Because of the direct threats, I've had to take my children out of school just to keep them safe."

"And last night, right on that mountain there [he pointed to a ridge overlooking the U.S. base, about 700 meters distant], a member of the ANP was murdered. The Taliban came and called him out, kidnapped him in front of his parents, and took him away and murdered him. He was a member of the ANP from another province and had come back to visit his parents. He was only 27 years old. The people are not safe anywhere."

That murder took place within view of the U.S. base, a post nominally responsible for the security of an area of hundreds of square kilometers. Imagine how insecure the population is beyond visual range. And yet that conversation was representative of what I saw in many regions of Afghanistan.

In all of the places I visited, the tactical situation was bad to abysmal. If the events I have described—and many, many more I could mention—had been in the first year of war, or even the third or fourth, one might be willing to believe that Afghanistan was just a hard fight, and we should stick it out. Yet these incidents all happened in the 10th year of war.

As the numbers depicting casualties and enemy violence indicate the absence of progress, so too did my observations of the tactical situation all over Afghanistan.

CREDIBILITY GAP

I'm hardly the only one who has noted the discrepancy between official statements and the truth on the ground.

A January 2011 report by the Afghan NGO Security Office noted that public statements made by U.S. and ISAF leaders at the end of 2010 were "sharply divergent from IMF, [international military forces, NGO-speak for ISAF] 'strategic communication' messages suggesting improvements. We encourage [nongovernment organization personnel] to recognize that no matter how authoritative the source of any such claim, messages of the nature are solely intended to influence American and European public opinion ahead of the withdrawal, and are not intended to offer an accurate portrayal of the situation for those who live and work here."

The following month, Anthony Cordesman, on behalf of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, wrote that ISAF and the U.S. leadership failed to report accurately on the reality of the situation in Afghanistan.

"Since June 2010, the unclassified reporting the U.S. does provide has steadily shrunk in content, effectively 'spinning' the road to victory by eliminating content that illustrates the full scale of the challenges ahead," Cordesman wrote. "They also, however, were driven by political decisions to ignore or understate Taliban and insurgent gains from 2002 to 2009, to ignore the problems caused by weak and corrupt Afghan governance, to understate the risks posed by sanctuaries in Pakistan, and to 'spin' the value of tactical ISAF victories while ignoring the steady growth of Taliban influence and control."

How many more men must die in support of a mission that is not succeeding and behind an array of more than seven years of optimistic statements by U.S. senior leaders in Afghanistan? No one expects our leaders to always have a successful plan. But we do expect—and the men who do the living, fighting and dying deserve—to have our leaders tell us the truth about what's going on.

I first encountered senior-level equivocation during a 1997 division-level "experiment" that turned out to be far more setpiece than experiment. Over dinner at Fort Hood, Texas, Training and Doctrine Command leaders told me that the Advanced Warfighter Experiment (AWE) had shown that a "digital division" with fewer troops and more gear could be far more effective than current divisions. The next day, our congressional staff delegation observed the demonstration firsthand, and it didn't take long to realize there was little substance to the claims. Virtually no legitimate experimentation was actually conducted. All parameters were carefully scripted. All events had a preordained sequence and outcome. The AWE was simply an expensive show, couched in the language of scientific experimentation and presented in glowing press releases and public statements, intended to persuade Congress to fund the Army's preference. Citing the AWE's "results," Army leaders proceeded to eliminate one maneuver company per combat battalion. But the loss of fighting systems was never offset by a commensurate rise in killing capability.

A decade later, in the summer of 2007, I was assigned to the Future Combat Systems (FCS) organization at Fort Bliss, Texas. It didn't take long to discover that the same thing the Army had done with a single division at Fort Hood in 1997 was now being done on a significantly larger scale with FCS. Year after year, the congressionally mandated reports from the Government Accountability Office revealed significant problems and warned that the system was in danger of failing. Each year, the Army's senior leaders told members of Congress at hearings that GAO didn't really understand the full picture and that to the contrary, the program was on schedule, on budget, and headed for suc-

cess. Ultimately, of course, the program was canceled, with little but spinoffs to show for \$18 billion spent.

If Americans were able to compare the public statements many of our leaders have made with classified data, this credibility gap would be immediately observable. Naturally, I am not authorized to divulge classified material to the public. But I am legally able to share it with members of Congress. I have accordingly provided a much fuller accounting in a classified report to several members of Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, senators and House members.

A nonclassified version is available at www.afghanreport.com. [Editor's note: At press time, Army public affairs had not yet ruled on whether Davis could post this longer version.]

TELL THE TRUTH

When it comes to deciding what matters are worth plunging our nation into war and which are not, our senior leaders owe it to the nation and to the uniformed members to be candid—graphically, if necessary—in telling them what's at stake and how expensive potential success is likely to be. U.S. citizens and their elected representatives can decide if the risk to blood and treasure is worth it.

Likewise when having to decide whether to continue a war, alter its aims or to close off a campaign that cannot be won at an acceptable price, our senior leaders have an obligation to tell Congress and American people the unvarnished truth and let the people decide what course of action to choose. That is the very essence of civilian control of the military. The American people deserve better than what they've gotten from their senior uniformed leaders over the last number of years. Simply telling the truth would be a good start.

[From the Huffington Post, Feb. 6, 2012]

LIEUTENANT COLONEL DAVIS, DEATH AND DECEPTION IN AFGHANISTAN

(By Matthew Hoh)

"God help this country when someone sits in this chair who doesn't know the military as well as I do."—President Dwight D. Eisenhower

In late December, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta assured Representative Frank Wolf (R-VA) that the United States was "making undeniable progress" in its war in Afghanistan and that a congressionally mandated, independent assessment of the war was "not necessary." However, recent media reports of internal Department of Defense and Intelligence Community assessments of the war contradict, again, claims of progress and illustrate instead that the war is stalemated with US policies over the last several years weakening the Karzai government and alienating the Afghan population, while strengthening the Afghan insurgency and ruining the US relationship with nuclear armed Pakistan. Independent studies of the conflict by non-government and international organizations corroborate these reports and assessments.

Today, the New York Times reports that an active duty Army officer, Lieutenant Colonel Daniel L. Davis, has submitted a classified report to members of Congress that documents the failings of US policy in Afghanistan. More importantly, LTC Davis attests that senior leaders of the Department of Defense, both uniformed and civilian, have intentionally and consistently misled the American people and Congress on the conduct and progress of the Afghan War. The 58-page classified report he prepared, briefed and submitted to senators, representatives and cleared staff members over the last few

weeks utilizes nearly 50 historical and current classified sources and draws from 250 interviews he conducted with soldiers throughout Afghanistan during his most recent year-long combat deployment.

In addition to the classified report, LTC Davis has written an 86-page unclassified version, as well as an article, published today by the Armed Forces Journal. These reports depict a near institutionalizing of dishonesty and deception by senior DOD leadership towards the American public and Congress. LTC Davis documents, as well, examples from the Iraq war and major weapons procurement programs to illustrate the persistent duplicity of the Pentagon's senior ranks. Victory narratives, career ambitions and institutional protection fuel these deceptions. Deceits that have only delivered the loss of thousands of lives, the waste of hundreds of billions of dollars and the failure to achieve American policy objectives.

LTC Davis has submitted his reports to the Department of the Army, his chain of command and the Department of Defense Inspector General. Hard copies of the classified reports are available for viewing by appropriately cleared members and staff of Congress. However, DOD has not publicly released the unclassified version, even with it being verified as not containing classified information. This is in spite of LTC Davis having provided the report for review to the Defense Department over two weeks ago (Defense Department regulations require only a 10 business day review). I am not surprised DOD is slow with its approval; his allegations are harsh and damning, although accurate and honest.

Danny Davis is a friend of mine; we have known each other since the fall of 2009. Bonding over coffees and lunches as rightful skeptics of the escalation of the Afghan war, we are now observing our worst concerns being realized. At a cost of over 11,000 killed and wounded Americans, the surge in Afghanistan is now being wound down without the achievement of its core objectives.* However, accompanying such a failure, are triumphant claims of success and accomplishment from American generals and their civilian counterparts. For those that comprehend the true consequences of this war: the cold, waxen dead; the mutilated flesh and shattered bone; the fatherless children so very young and the new widows so alone and so heartbroken; such specious and unfounded claims of progress without fact in this war are reckless, dishonorable and injurious.

Over the last several months, at great risk to his career and personal life, LTC Davis has documented the deliberate misleading of the American people and Congress by the leaders of the Department of Defense.** He has done his nation and the United States Army a tremendous service. Thus far the Army has taken no punitive action against LTC Davis, however, I have no doubt his character and motivations will ultimately be attacked and disparaged. I suspect elements of DOD leadership and their supporters will seek to discredit him and persecute him. I am afraid he will face significant, but spurious, investigations and prosecutions for his truth telling actions, such as Justice Department lawyer Thomas Tamm or National Security Agency employee Thomas Drake had to suffer, or that State Department officer Peter Van Buren is currently enduring.

Over 5,500 Americans were killed or wounded in Afghanistan in 2011. Tens of thousands who have come home will soldier a lifetime with the unseen scars of post-traumatic stress or traumatic brain injury. Our service members find themselves held to account on a callous and unsympathetic battlefield in a schizophrenic and absurd war. They do what is expected of them and hold themselves responsible to those who depend on them.

In contrast, for those in Washington charged with the decisions of war and peace, many of the participants seem to alternate between Pollyannas, chickenhawks and those who have lost sight of the difference between respect for and deference to the military. Any accounting for last year's 5,500 killed and wounded, if the discussants are even aware of the toll, is only a mathematical exercise, and an abstract one at that.

We expect our service members in Afghanistan to do the hard, brutal and savage fighting our policies ask of them without question. They do. Their expectation of those of us in Washington, those of us in our heated offices, wearing ties and high heels, who wake each day safe with our families, is that we ask hard questions, examine the reality of the conflict and not accept assertions of success without evidence.

The assumptions underlying the escalation of the Afghan war were incorrect. The Afghan surge, viewed by policy makers and some in the military as some form of social experiment to validate personal and institutional legacies and theories, rather than achieve US objectives worthy of bodily sacrifice, is failing. LTC Davis has demonstrated the courage to expose the deceptions that perpetuate this war, its failings and its deaths. It is now up to the American people and its Congress to hold those who were not just wrong, but mendacious, to account.

*To be clear, however, continuation of the current war policy would simply be madness. Secretary Panetta's recent announcement to end US combat operations in 2013 is a wise decision (wiser if it had been made in 2009); particularly if this policy shift is coupled with a transition of the role of the US from belligerent in the conflict to mediator of an inclusive political process to settle the three decade plus Afghan war.

**Myself and investigative journalist and historian Gareth Porter, and former intelligence officer and author Tony Shaffer, have provided moral support throughout this process.

ODDS AND SODS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. McCOTTER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCOTTER. Mr. Speaker, odds and sods for brunch this morning.

We have recently seen an ad that played during the Super Bowl that is referred to as the halftime ad. It has caused much discussion in this country, much of it focusing on the political dimension of the attempt to sell cars that were made in my hometown of Detroit.

First I must admit that I disagree with the premise of the ad, that it is halftime in America. For logically, we would then have to conclude that the free Republic in which we inhabit will expire before its 500th birthday. I refuse to concede that a revolutionary experiment in human freedom has any timeline whatsoever. But what I do wholeheartedly concur with is the fact that American manufacturing, especially our auto industry, is starting to revive. As it does, it will continue to form a critical engine of any economic recovery we have and will form the basis of ensuring that our American

economy leads the world. Yet despite this nascent recovery, we must continue to watch the horizon for any dangers that may loom to our industrial base here at home.

One of these is the attempt of our strong ally Japan to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership initiative. Currently the United States, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam are trying to ensure the free flow of goods, including automobiles, amongst our Nations. Japan wishes to enter into this partnership which was formed. Unfortunately, the time is not right. For Japan, like Communist China, continues to manipulate currency, continues to put up nontariff trade-entry barriers, and until Japan has restructured and reformed itself, their entry into this organization, to this initiative can only slow the progress and have a detrimental impact upon our manufacturing base.

I would encourage all to understand the importance—not just to those of us who were born and bred in what was once known as the arsenal of democracy—to understand the importance of manufacturing. I ask this administration and I ask all those involved in this initiative to ask Japan to do the right thing before they join us at the table and embark upon a greater period of prosperity for our nations.

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Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to point out, as I did when the ObamaCare legislation on health care was passed: So this is what change looks like.

As an Irish Catholic, I remind my coreligionists and all Americans that no government can come between you and your conscience and the central tenets of your creed. What we are seeing now is the unfortunate fruits of the logical extension of the cesspool of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his civil religion whereby your true religion was tolerated as long as it was subservient to the state. That is not what this Nation is about. It is a clear violation of your constitutional right to freely exercise your religion.

There is no debate. There is nothing to be worked out. This odious regulation must be withdrawn, lest this administration or those who support it go back on their word to protect and defend your rights under that said Constitution, and, as a practical matter, belie the left's myth that they will not enforce their morality on you.

END THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to speak about the Afghanistan war. I commend President Obama's administration for the steps it has taken to bring the longest war in our Nation's history to a close.