I thank

the distinguished chairwoman, MAXINE

WATERS. I would say I am delighted to

be part of the Out-of-Iraq Caucus, but

that is not the appropriate term. I am

delighted, however, to join my colleagues,

Chairwoman WATERS and Congresswoman

BARBARA LEE and the

other members who have participated

and submitted their statement.

I wanted to join my colleagues because

it has been a very long journey.

I remind Congresswoman WATERS in

the fall of 2002, we were working hard

for people to study the resolution being

put before them. We garnered some 133-

plus votes to vote in opposition to the

then-Iraq resolution.

I want to speak constitutionally and

why this special order and the position

that Members are taking in opposing

any preemptive attack or invasion of

Iran and standing solidly against the

perceived authority that the President

may have.

Frankly, if we look at the 2002 resolution,

we will find that it can be assessed

that the President’s authority

has expired. Saddam Hussein is no

longer there. Elements of the resolution

required that. The government has

changed. There has been a democratic

election, and there may be some question

as to whether the adherence of the

U.N. Security Council resolution is

still part of that 2002 war resolution.

But I would argue that there have been

so many resolutions in the U.N. we

could also concede the point that we

have protected or adhered to those resolutions.

I truly believe that we are at such a

point in history that any actions by

the President would warrant extreme

actions; or I should not suggest extreme,

I should suggest constitutional

actions by this Congress. It may warrant

raising issues of impeachment.

The reason I say that is to use the War

Powers Act in a way that ignores the

constitutional privilege and right of

this Congress to declare war, I believe,

is not doing well by the American people.

We already know the results of a war

without end, the Iraq war, that is costing

$339 million a day, that has already

gone past a trillion dollars, that has

seen 9,500 of our soldiers injured or

maimed, sometimes injured or maimed

for life, to see 4,000-plus die. It is a war

without end.

Frankly, the question has to become

what is the President’s goal and intent

if he has an idea that Iran is the next

target. Has he looked to diplomacy and

looked to the question of working with

China or Russia to contain Iran? Has

he looked at negotiation with the individuals

in Iran who really may be interested

in some sort of resolution? Is

he buying into the constant refrain

that Iran is providing the weapons in

Iraq? Is he also looking to the perceived

friendship between the Iraq government

and the Iran government?

None of the above.

What I sense in the administration is

a percolating attempt to attack Iran,

and that percolating attempt based

upon the representation of nuclear

weapons. I don’t want Iran to possess

the capacity to engage and to utilize

nuclear weapons, nor am I interested in

protecting an Iran that has been hostile

to the world. I am not interested in

coddling terrorists. But we can clearly

see that the policies in Iraq have not

deterred the terrorists. They have only

grown the terrorists. And I would question

whether the only way to create

peace in the Mid East is to again attack

another country in the Mid East.

It is important that we continue to

engage for two distinct states, the Palestinian

and Israel negotiations. I

would have hoped that this administration

would have spent their time following

through on the road map that

the President announced some few

years back. I believe that we were distracted

in Iraq. We were distracted in

Iraq from Afghanistan and from solving

the Palestinian-Israeli question.

So I rise today to join my colleagues

and say not on my watch, absolutely

not. The statistics of the war in Iraq

are devastating. Yes, I am prepared

today to declare a military success in

Iraq. A military success means that

our soldiers on one and two and three

and four redeployments have done everything

the Commander in Chief has

asked them to do. Saddam Hussein is

gone, there have been democratic elections,

and U.N. resolutions adhered to.

Bring those soldiers home, declare a

military success, and make the statement

to the American people that we

will never recklessly invade another

country.

Iran is somewhat different from Iraq;

and, therefore, may have a different

story to tell. It may not be the easy

route that they might have thought

Iraq was. But frankly, my view is that

we have crossed the constitutional

bounds and that as I yield back to the

distinguished chairwoman, I simply believe

that we have come to a crisis

point that this Congress must accept

its duty and say to the President that

no war can be declared without a vote

of the United States Congress under

the Constitution, and I would join with

my colleagues, the chairman of the

Human Right Subcommittee on International

Issues of the Foreign Affairs

Committee, Chairman DELAHUNT, to

suggest that the War Powers Act

should be amended and should now be

that it can only be utilized by a President

when the Nation is under imminent

attack and when there is necessity

to go forward to protect our citizens.

Other than that, that War Powers

Act should be amended, it should be

drawn down, and we should stand with

the Constitution. No invasion of Iran

on my watch, and constitutional implications

for the President of the United

States if such attack is proposed.

I thank the distinguished gentlelady

for her leadership in the Out-of-Iraq

Caucus.

I join my colleagues here tonight to discuss

a very important issue: the possibility that this

Administration may be intent on leading us

into another war in the Middle East, this time

against Iran. I would like to thank my colleague

Congresswoman WATERS for organizing

this special order on Iran. Even as we

remain engaged in a war in Iraq to which

there is no military solution, this Administration

has begun beating the drum for war with Iran.

I strongly urge my congressional colleagues to

send a clear message to President Bush that

he does not currently have authorization to

use military force against Iran.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that using a military

strike against Iran would be a colossal error.

As a nation, we are still paying an unacceptably

high price for this Administration’s ill-advised

and ill-executed invasion of Iraq in

March 2003. In 2002, when I voted against the

Joint Resolution to Authorize the Use of

United States Armed Forces Against Iraq, I did

so because I believed that this would be a war

without end. I believed this resolution would

trap us in a conflict that, like the Vietnam War,

would consume American resources and lives

without tangible yield. Unfortunately for the

people of both this country and Iraq, this has

proven true.

As a nation, we have already paid an enormous

price for the war in Iraq. We have

squandered an exponentially increasing

amount of money, and, worst of all, lost an unacceptably

large number of American lives.

However, the over 4,000 U.S. casualties and

the $3,919 per second ($123.6 billion per

year) we are spending in Iraq have bought

neither peace nor security.

Mr. Speaker, even as our troops are caught

in the midst of instability and civil war in Iraq,

the President has begun the march to war

with Iran. We cannot compound the mistakes

of the Iraq war with the even bigger mistake

of opening up a second military conflict in the

Middle East. And yet, the Administration has

begun to set the stage for a U.S. attack on

Iranian military or nuclear facilities by issuing

strong statements about Iran’s intervention in

Iraq, and using inflammatory rhetoric against

Iran in a similar fashion to the run-up to the

Iraq war.

In recent weeks, the Administration has increasingly

referred to negative behavior of the

Iranian regime. Despite contrary findings by

the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), Bush

has increasingly stated that Iran is building nuclear

weapons. The Administration has also

cited Iran as a cause of instability in Iraq, and

has argued that Iran is killing U.S. soldiers

and supplying weapons, training, and funding.

I certainly believe that the current state of

affairs in Iran, and specifically those issues relating

to U.S. sanctions on Iran and the security

of the region, are extremely important and

in desperate need of discussion. As a Member

of Congress, I find Iran’s support of terrorist

organizations, pursuit of nuclear weapons, and

dismal human rights record to be extremely

worrisome. However, I am also concerned by

what appears to be movement by this Administration

toward yet another war in the Gulf region,

without having first exhausted diplomatic

means of addressing any conflicts.

I have long been an advocate of a free,

independent, and democratic Iran. I believe in

an Iran that holds free elections, follows the

rule of law, and is home to a vibrant civil society;

an Iran that is a responsible member of

the region and the international community,

particularly with respect to the proliferation of

nuclear weapons. An Iran that, unfortunately,

we do not see today.

The only effective way to achieve lasting

peace and prosperity in the region, along with

bringing about reforms in Iran’s polity, is to assist

the Iranian people in their quest to

achieve political, social, and religious liberty.

Every government can be judged with the way

in which it treats its ethnic and religious minorities,

and the current Iranian government

gets a failing grade for its treatment of its

many and diverse minorities.

The controversy surrounding Iran’s procurement

of nuclear energy is cause for great concern;

however, the administration’s avoidance

of any and all diplomatic relations with Iran is

cause for greater alarm. Moreover, the current

rhetoric from the Bush Administration regarding

war with Iran is both counterproductive

and highly inflammatory. While full diplomatic,

political, and economic relations between the

U.S. and Iran cannot be normalized unless

and until enforceable safeguards are put in

place to prevent the weaponization of Iran’s

nuclear program, these policy objectives

should not constitute pre-conditions for any

diplomatic dialogue.

Establishing a diplomatic dialogue with the

Government of Iran and deepening relationships

with the Iranian people would help foster

greater understanding between the people of

Iran and the people of the United States and

would enhance the stability and the security of

the Persian Gulf region. Doing so would reduce

the threat of the proliferation or use of

nuclear weapons in the region, while advancing

other U.S. foreign policy objectives in the

region. The significance of establishing and

sustaining diplomatic relations with Iran cannot

be over-emphasized. Avoidance and military

intervention cannot be the means through

which we resolve this looming crisis.

Mr. Speaker, Middle East experts have repeatedly

stated that a U.S. attack on Iran

would have disastrous consequences. Among

possible outcomes, many experts agree,

would be an Iranian counter-attack on U.S.

and Israeli interests in the region or throughout

the world. Such an attack could also lead

to a greater Middle East War, and would undoubtedly

bring with it a greater loss of life

and financial burden.

Mr. Speaker, now is the time that we need

to be looking to ending one Middle East conflict,

not to beginning another. We need to

work to rebuild our standing in the international

community, not to raise further enmity

in the Middle East and beyond by attacking

another nation. I strongly urge my colleagues

to speak out against any potential military

strike in Iran.

If the

gentlelady would yield, I just came

back from Iraq, and you are so right.

After going and I think getting a very

wide view of the status of affairs there,

clearly as we have understood or understand,

the government is leaning on

the captains of our military. Ranks at

the captain level are like the government.

There is no seeming intent or

plan that would cease the Maliki government

from leaning on the United

States military, using it as a crutch.

So there is no evidence that suggests

that they don’t intend to have permanent

military bases. In fact, every indication

from the presentations of the

military and others is that they would

have it. I believe they are in violation

of maybe not the rules of this House,

but certainly the respect of the three

branches of government.

Finally, I would say that I have legislation

that declares a military success,

that lists the criteria under which our

soldiers went in, and moves it to a diplomatic

surge. We should not fool ourselves.

The intent is a permanent base

that allows them to do the preemptive

strike that you are speaking of against

any country in the Mideast, and in particular

Iran. I believe we have to stop

it now, and we have to stop it forever,

and we have to lean on the Constitution

because we have seen over the last

couple of years the Constitution ignored,

and that simply cannot stand in

this place called America.