I thank the gentlelady from California, and I

particularly thank you for your astuteness on bringing us together. If

I might reflect on memory lane that was very painful, we traveled a lot

together, and I think of the moments in history on the Iraq war. The

rising up of the American people was powerful, from San Francisco to

places in between, to the quarter of a million people that walked down

53rd and 57th Street in New York on a cold morning in January.

People all over America recognized that it was not these brave men

and women that you see here. And I brought pictures of wonderful

families and men and women who were called to serve who we continue to

honor and appreciate. I thought it was important to acknowledge that

our soldiers have families. We see it all the time. My district is near

Ellington Field, and it is increasingly becoming a base utilizing the

talents of young Americans who are willing to volunteer. So I take this

10th anniversary, as well, to pay tribute to them and those who still

serve in foreign fields around the world. We know that they still serve

in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So we come here today on the 10th anniversary simply to ask the

question: Why? And when we ask the question why, it is not a selfish

question on behalf of Members of Congress. It is a question on behalf

of those brave men and women who, no matter who calls them as Commander

in Chief and for what cause, they accept the cause. For that reason, it

is imperative that we understand the battle into which we send them.

In the Iraq war, it was alleged there were weapons of mass

destruction. We have come to a fairly complete conclusion that there

were no such weapons. We all knew Saddam Hussein, and none of us

adhered to his despotic and horrible governance. But I will tell you,

my colleagues thought the same thing, that our approach should have

been different. The bloodshed not only of the young men and women that

you see here, some of their comrades were lost, but the millions, the

numbers of Iraqi people who themselves, their lives were lost and of

course still continue to be in danger.

The Iraq war saw more than 4,400 brave men and women who wore the

United States uniform make the ultimate sacrifice, and tens upon tens

of thousands who in actuality were wounded. Over 32,000 of the men and

women who came home suffered wounds. But as we know, those numbers have

risen. Some 3,000 of the wounded call Texas their home, 500 lost their

lives. We know the scars that were left on families--mother, fathers,

children, and wives. We realized that we needed to make a better

judgment.

As the tragedy unfolded in Boston, one of the emergency physicians,

one of the medical professionals, said they knew exactly what it was

because they had been to Iraq, and they understood the sound of the

IEDs. How many of our brave men and women encountered these makeshift

IEDs that tore through their body and either killed them or completely

amputated or caused the amputation of their arms or legs and the

disfigurement of their face. We see them now. We call them wounded

warriors. We call them heroes, and certainly those who followed in

Afghanistan.

But this 10th year reminds us to ask: Have we made the progress that

we should have? The gentlelady spoke of the moneys, $800 billion that

has directly contributed to the Nation's deficit, and the amount of

money that was supposed to be used for restoration; and because there

was no infrastructure in Iraq, we made our Army personnel be the little

government.

We made soldiers be the ones that had to interact with the village

leaders and the chiefs, and carry monies to them. No, nothing accounted

for; just good intentions, following orders. But we cannot account for

those dollars. We don't know if they made a difference. We don't know

if they helped bring Iraqis home. We don't know if they helped build

schools or hospitals.

So I think it is important to note that when we make decisions

regarding war, we need to think about soldiers holding their families

and loving their families. We need to think about the better way to go,

and we need to ask those whose war we fight--Saddam Hussein is gone--

the people whose war we fight, the conflict between the Shiites and

Sunnis.

We need to understand our history as to whether or not a war that

would see the loss of all these brilliant young people, divide

families, whether or not we can bring some measure of peace, some

comfort, some stability.

And I'd venture to say today that we have not. And I say this to the

head of Iraq, the leader, Mr. Maliki, for his participation in the

ongoing conflict in Iraq, because that is the case.

There is no coming together of the Shiites and Sunnis. There is a

cluster of a government that hides in the walls, that does not go out

and try to bring peace to the people. And I give you one example, Mr.

Speaker, that troubles me over and over again--it is the Iranians who

left Iran.

We know the conflicted issues and alliances were all, if you will,

misunderstood; old alliances, friends and enemies. We understand that.

But this is supposed to be a peaceful nation now, and there are

Iranians who fled the despotic Iran, and have become, in essence,

enemies of Iran.

They started out in Camp Ashraf. They were called rebels and

terrorists. They have now been vindicated, and they're not called that

anymore.

But let me tell you what the present government of Iraq allows. They

allow, in the camp that was Camp Ashraf that is now Camp Liberty, bombs

to go in from the Iraqi soldiers. They allow no medical care to come

into that particular camp.

Just yesterday, the Friends of Iran, American Iranians were here, and

they had 10 people or more, their faces, who had died in that camp

because the government of Iraq, the government that we shed blood for,

that we asked to be a peaceful nation, is, in essence, attacking people

on their soil who are unarmed, who are not interested in war, who fled

because they'd been persecuted.

And they don't allow them to get access to cars, access to hospitals,

and so people die from sicknesses because they could not get care.

When we go into battle and send our troops into battle, shouldn't we

ask the question of what is the ultimate result?

We understand that democracy in its structure that is here in the

United States cannot only be the structure that fits every community,

every nation, every faith. But what I would say to you is that we bring

one of those C-130s, big C-130s that many of us have rode on to go into

Iraq. And I spent many hours there, nothing in comparison, of course,

to those who served, but I'm grateful I had the opportunity to go and

serve and see those individuals who served, and to sit down with those

from Texas and to break bread with them.

When we land one of those C-130s, why don't we know, and shouldn't we

know our purpose, our goal, what is our ultimate direction that we

would like to see?

Not the dominance of the United States over this nation that we help

but to be able to know that they, too, stand for democracy and peace.

I want to thank the gentlelady from California for allowing me to

share this time with her, and to say, it's important to remind us of

the 10th anniversary, one, to say thank you, for when we land these C-

130s and these men and women come out ready for battle, they are

wearing our uniform and our flag but, at the same time, we must ask the

question, for what? For what results? For what long-range results? For

what peace? For we owe that to them.

I ask that we consider those in Camp Liberty and we find relief for

them. I thank the gentlelady very much.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in solidarity with my fellow members of the

Congressional Progressive Caucus to speak in recognition of the 10th

Anniversary of the Iraq war. I want to thank my colleagues,

Representatives Lee and Waters for anchoring this Special Order.

On March 19, 2003 President Bush launched invasion of Iraq ten years

ago under a cloud of questions about the motivations for the invasion.

Today we see the toll of this war on our young military men and women,

their families and communities across our nation.

First and foremost, I would like to thank our troops who served in

the Iraq war, but more broadly I would like to thank all members of the

armed forces for their courage and heroism under circumstances that few

of us could imagine. As members of Congress we have, regardless of our

view of the wisdom of entering into armed conflict with Iraq, have

always stood in strong and unwavering solidarity with our troops.

Part of our role as representatives in Congress is to give voice to

the plight of our constituents that include men and women in the armed

forces--many of them served tour after tour after tour without break;

and in the beginning of the war had insufficient equipment to protect

them from IEDs which cost the nation countless lives and left many with

traumatic life changing injuries.

We cannot forget their sacrifice and heroism in the face of what was

asked of them. In April of last year the great city of Houston, which I

am proud to represent, hosted a Bayou City-style parade honoring the

homecoming of the American troops. This gesture of thanks defines the

support that Houston has for our troops in any situation.

During the course of the Iraq War more than 4,400 brave men and women

in uniform made the ultimate sacrifice and over 32,000 were wounded. Of

these brave men and women more than 500 of the fallen and 3,000 of the

wounded call Texas their home.

In 2003 I fought with many of my colleagues in the Congressional

Progressive Caucus to ensure that the order to proceed with the Iraq

War did not pass the House, but our efforts were not successful.

Although we have withdrawn from Iraq it is imperative to understand

that the withdrawal is not synonymous with the end of the war on

terror. It has been my stance since the beginning of the war that there

are different steps that must be taken to combat terror--which include

diplomatic and humanitarian efforts.

The war also had an economic cost to our nation, which we are still

paying and will continue to pay until our colleagues on the other side

of the isle resolve to battle the economic threat at home with the

vigor of the fight against a less than creditable threat many thought

they saw in Iraq 10 years ago.

The monetary cost of the war exceeded $800 billion, which directly

contributed to the nation's deficit that is now trying to be mended by

the Sequester. More worrisome, the long terms costs from the results of

the war are expected to exceed $3 trillion.

Since our withdrawal, insurgencies have erupted across the country of

Iraq. Iraq has been seen to gravitate towards Iran, a nation that has

openly been hostile towards U.S. mission, and one that has proven to be

a source of destabilization in the area.

The remedies to these issues once again come from intelligence and

diplomatic channels that do not include invasions like the one the

United States so hastily entered into with Iraq.

The tactical withdrawal from Iraq can be seen with some high regard

as a template for how to end the war in Afghanistan, and exit the

region safely and decisively. As a nation we must turn away from this

past decade of occupying countries in the name of fighting terror.

These endless occupations delay the creation of opportunity within our

own nation, which must be one of the priorities as we attempt to

overcome the economic hardships facing the nation.

In closing, I would once again like to extend my deepest gratitude to

our troops fighting across the nation on the 10th Anniversary of the

Iraq War, and would like to thank my Congressional Progressive Caucus

colleagues again for hosting this event.

In this post-Iraq time we must turn our attention to helping' our men

and women who have fought bravely overseas to ensure our freedom and

the promotion of democracy.

Earlier this week a new Veterans Affairs outpatient clinic was opened

in the Houston area, which will shorten the distance between Houston

veterans and the care they need. The nearly 30,000 square foot

establishment provides primary health care, mental healthcare, women's

specialty care, x-rays, optometry, physical therapy, occupational

therapy, ENT (ear, nose and throat) and audiology. The new center will

have a fully operational laboratory by July, as well as a visiting

cardiologist and surgical physician's assistant for minor procedures.

The new clinic is expected to service 7,000 to 8,000 veterans within

its first year of operation and create more than 50 paying jobs.

The Houston area clinic is one of many Community-Based clinics that

have been established in response to the growing number of Iraq and

Afghanistan veterans returning from war. It is vital that we keep these

veterans, and current soldiers, in mind as we develop policies to

ensure their care and wellbeing.