Mr. Speaker, first, let me just say I'm very

pleased to anchor this Congressional Progressive Caucus Special Order

on Iraq with my colleague from California, Congresswoman Maxine Waters.

Let me also take a moment to thank Congresswoman Waters, who is the

founder of the Out of Iraq Caucus. Congresswoman Waters had the vision

and the determination to pull together Members of the House who really

needed some space, who needed to be able to provide legislative

strategies and to beat the drum to end this war in Iraq. The country

owes Congresswoman Waters a debt of gratitude, and we thank you very

much for that.

I also want to acknowledge Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, who retired

from Congress at the end of last year, but who loomed so large during

this Special Order, given her incredible leadership in working to end

the war in Iraq and to bring our troops home. She is and remains our

sister in arms when it comes to working for global peace and security

for our children, all of our collective work.

It was no wonder that many observers called Congresswomen Waters,

Woolsey, and myself ``The Triad,'' but it was actually Congresswoman

Woolsey who coined this term in our formation.

We are here today to reflect back on the 10-year anniversary of the

start of the unnecessary, immoral, and costly war and to remember and

pay tribute to the sacrifices of our troops, those who lost their

lives, the injured, their families, and their loved ones, many of whom

are still grappling with the scars and the impact of the war. We are

also here to reflect on the costs of this war in blood and treasure. On

the costs of this war: $800 billion, 4,486 soldiers, an untold number

of Iraqi civilians, countless refugees, and also on the lost

opportunity costs of this war to our country.

Instead of spending $800 billion on Iraq, we could have created jobs,

rebuilt our crumbling infrastructure or invested in our schools to

provide every child with a 21st century education. Sadly, this list

goes on and on. It is especially painful when we understand that this

war never should have happened in the first place. It was a war of

choice. It was unnecessary; it was immoral; and it was wrong.

Over 10 years now in the run-up to the war, there were those of us in

Congress and millions of people in the antiwar movement who fought the

launch of this war. We had questions about weapons of mass destruction

claims. We pushed for hearings; we called for a full debate; and we

called to halt the rush to war.

In October 2002, the Bush administration pushed for invading Iraq.

During that time, I was on the Foreign Affairs Committee. I proposed an

amendment, which the Rules Committee made in

order. We brought that amendment to the floor, which would have

required the United Nations to continue with weapons inspections. At

that time, I stated on this House floor that unilateralism is really

not the answer. If Iraqi weapons of mass destruction are a problem to

the world community, yes, we must confront it. We must do so through

the United Nations, and we must determine whether or not there are

weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. There were 72 of my colleagues who

voted in favor of this amendment, which would have led us to the same

conclusion that so many soldiers lost their lives and limbs to reach--

that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. We all know the

tragedy that followed.

The Bush administration launched its war of choice, claimed its

``mission accomplished,'' and chose to send pallets of shrink-wrapped

cash and more of our brave young men and women to fight on and on--

despite the fact that there was no real military solution to the

quagmire that the Bush administration created.

It is important to remember that this war did not go unchallenged,

that there was a tremendous groundswell of opposition and that that was

critical in demanding its end and in helping to bring it to a close,

finally, under President Obama. In Congress, this opposition was

centered around the Out of Iraq Caucus, which Congresswoman Waters,

whom I mentioned earlier, founded, and Congresswoman Woolsey and I

helped cofound. This was in 2005. Together, we held ad hoc hearings

that the Republican congressional leadership refused to hold or

participate in. We held press conferences, wrote op-eds, and took the

floor to sound the alarm.

Here I need to acknowledge, as I know Congresswoman Waters will--

because I know this is a very important benchmark to acknowledge--that

Congresswoman Woolsey on this point delivered 441 floor speeches over

the last decade to call for the war's end.

We worked with our grassroots allies, like MoveOn, Win Without War,

Progressive Democrats of America, the Friends Committee on National

Legislation, United for Peace and Justice, Peace Action, and with great

leaders like Tom Hayden and others, to help build a movement to bring

our troops home.

I recall vividly when we marched here in Washington, D.C., past the

White House, with hundreds of thousands of protesters in opposition to

the war. These marches and rallies and actions happened all across this

country. I have to say, in northern California and especially in the

East Bay and in San Francisco--the entire Bay Area of California--they

were really at the forefront of this effort. Of course we worked the

legislative process as hard as we possibly could. There were many

members of the Out of Iraq Caucus who led important legislative efforts

to end the war:

I recall clearly the efforts of Congresswoman Woolsey, who offered

the very first sense of Congress resolution calling for an end to the

war and to bring our troops home. From what I remember, she received

approximately 132, 133 votes for that resolution, but that was another

defining moment;

There was a resolution that I offered very early on to repeal the

doctrine of preemption--that's preemptive war. In other words, let's

start a war to prevent a future war, which the President claimed in

waging the war in Iraq;

There was the McGovern amendment, led by Congressman McGovern, who

led on the effort to bring a responsible end to the war by calling for

a timetable;

Then, of course, my annual Lee amendment: to limit the funding for

the safe, timely, and orderly withdrawal of our troops. What this Lee

amendment was trying to accomplish was to stop the funding and to end

combat operations but to protect our troops and contractors and bring

them home.

One of my amendments, the Lee amendment, eventually was signed into

law, which was to prohibit permanent bases in Iraq. Now that is and was

and continues to be the law of the land. There were so many other

efforts led by members of the Out of Iraq Caucus--from amendments, to

resolutions, to letters, and to floor actions.

I want to yield now to my colleague from California and just, once

again, thank her for her tremendous leadership in case she has to leave

early before this hour ends.

Congresswoman Waters, thank you so much for

that very eloquent and profound statement and for your kind remarks.

Let me just say to you also that you have been a woman who has always

believed that peace is possible and peace is patriotic. So I just want

to thank you for your leadership, for being here with us, and just say

how proud we are that you are our Financial Services ranking member

also. Thank you.

Let me take a moment now to yield to the gentleman from California,

Congressman Mark Takano, who has been way out there in terms of

opposing this war from day one.

Thank you again for being here.

Let me go back now to the 10th anniversary of

this unfortunate war, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to introduce now into the Record tonight a timeline of some

of what we have talked about tonight because they should be remembered

and because these efforts and the efforts of the movement that ended

this war finally did make a difference, although obviously not as

quickly as we wanted; but we did make a difference together.

After years of speaking out and as the toll of the Iraq war stretched

the patience of the American people, public opinion started turning.

People began asking what were we doing in Iraq. Iraq had no weapons of

mass destruction, as the Bush administration told us. Iraq had not been

involved in the 9/11 attacks, as suggested by the Bush administration.

Then-Secretary of State Colin Powell made a presentation at the

United Nations that was greatly misleading, stating that Iraq possessed

extremely dangerous weapons of mass destruction. Some of you may

remember the smoking cloud that he talked about. It was just really

very, very tragic. He described biological weapons factories on wheels,

and estimated that Iraq had between 100 and 150 tons--no, I believe it

may have been 500 tons--of chemical weapons stockpiled. All of those

claims about weapons of mass destruction turned out to be false.

Secretary of State Powell's own chief of staff, Colonel Lawrence

Wilkerson, later said about his own participation in the deception at

the United Nations, he said:

Iraq did not present a clear and present danger to the United States.

Secretary Powell and his staff, they

knew this. President Bush, he knew this. Vice President Cheney, he knew

this. But they wanted their war and they deceived the United Nations

and scared the American public to justify their war of choice.

I distinctly remember the day in May 2003, 10 years ago next week,

when President Bush stood on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln and

proclaimed ``Mission Accomplished.'' Of course, the mission was far

from accomplished. The war was to drag on for another 8 years.

President Obama committed to ending the war during his campaign; and

he, of course, did as President. While the war in Iraq is over, its

legacy continues and the lessons still have yet to be learned. We need

to look closely at the decisions made, understand the mistakes and

misjudgments, and ensure that we never again repeat such a tragedy.

In Ghana, in the Akan language of Ghana, there is a mythical bird

that's a symbol. It's called Sankofa. It's a bird flying forward

looking back, and the message is that in order to not make the same

mistakes as we move forward, we have to look back and we have to know

our history. We have to know where we have come from, what we have done

in order to move forward, and we should learn from those mistakes.

Sankofa.

The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction issued its

final report to Congress just last month, detailing billions and

billions of dollars lost to waste, fraud, and abuse. The occupation of

Iraq was characterized by poor planning by the Bush administration, who

ignored State Department and USAID analysis envisioning protracted U.S.

involvement in Iraq requiring substantial spending for many years.

The Pentagon was left in charge of managing postwar Iraq, and Defense

Secretary Donald Rumsfeld famously underestimated the resources needed

to stabilize the country. When Lieutenant General Jay Gardner told

Secretary Rumsfeld that the United States might need to spend billions

of dollars to rebuild Iraq, Rumsfeld responded:

Well, of course, it was Mr. Rumsfeld who was sadly mistaken, and the

American public who was sadly misled, and the Iraqi people who sadly

suffered from the chaos and destruction unleashed by ideologues who

used Iraq as a laboratory for a light-footprint war.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, those lost opportunities and tragic

mistakes are not behind us.

I would like to take a moment now and yield to my friend and

colleague, a woman who has consistently been against the war and has

stood for peace all of her life, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee.

Let me thank the gentlelady from Texas for

that very profound statement and presentation. And just let me say to

you that, as the daughter of a 25-year veteran of the Armed Forces, I

am deeply thankful for your bringing forth the faces of our Armed

Forces.

And also, talking about the obstacles now that they're facing upon

their return, I'm especially concerned with the widespread and often

undiagnosed incidents of PTSD and the alarming suicide rates among our

soldiers.

The back claims, the Veterans Affairs losing records, denying claims

that are clearly service-related. I want to acknowledge Congresswoman

Jackie Speier and her work in our area and throughout the country to

try to address the backlog of claims of our veterans who don't deserve

to be treated this way.

Since the invasion of Iraq 10 years ago, over 2,000 current and

former service members have committed suicide. The lessons from this

tragedy cannot be any clearer. It's a lot easier to get into war than

to get out of one.

It's my hope, Mr. Speaker, that this reckless and shortsighted

decision will mark a turning point in American history, and that we

will be more careful about war and use all of the tools of American

power, as Congresswoman Woolsey so eloquently talked to us about and

introduced over and over again, SMART security that should be used in

resolving disputes, including diplomacy.

Let me ask you, Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

I would like to know if the gentlelady from

Texas has anything else to say. Otherwise, we will close.

Let me just use a bit more time and say that there's no military

solution in

Afghanistan either, so we must absorb that fact and learn, again, what

we learned in Iraq. And we need to bring the war in Afghanistan to an

accelerated end.

We need to stop throwing good money after bad, poorly conceived and

poorly managed reconstruction efforts, and bring our troops home now.

And we need to repeal the 2001 Authorization For the Use of Military

Force, which Congresswoman Waters mentioned, which I voted against

right after the horrific events of 9/11. This overly broad blank check

has underwritten the past decade of perpetual war.

I have a resolution, H.R. 198, it's the Repeal of the Authorization

For the Use of Military Force. This will remove one of the underlying

legal justifications for targeted drone killings that has been invoked

over and over again, this time, targeted killings, to justify a wide

range of activities, including warrantless surveillance and wiretapping

activities, and, yes, a blank check for war anywhere, anytime, for any

length of time.

I hope those who are listening and who care about this, go back and

read that resolution of 9/14. What it said was the President, and I'm

paraphrasing now, but it was the President is authorized to use force

against any nation, organization, individual, deemed connected to

terrorism and the 9/11 attacks.

Now, this was in 2001. 2001. No end game, no timetable, a blank

check, perpetual war until this is repealed. So Congress really needs

to reassert its constitutional authority in the matters of war. Our

Founding Fathers were very deliberate in placing war-making powers in

this body. In a democracy, such as ours, we have this system of checks

and balances.

On 9/14, we did not have a full debate. From what I remember, it may

have been an hour, it may have been 2 hours. But we did not fully

debate that blank check and what that meant by authorizing then-

President Bush, now President Obama and any future President, to use

force in perpetuity.

We can no longer abdicate our constitutional duties allowing any

President to engage in hostilities without debate, without oversight,

and without accountability.

And I want to commend Senator Durbin for conducting hearings this

week looking at the constitutionality and the rationale for targeted

killings using drones. This was a very important hearing. I was able to

sit through some of that hearing, and it was very revealing. Actually,

there was a young man from Yemen who received a State Department

scholarship. He went to school here, had gone back to Yemen, and his

village was devastated by drones.

So you can see what's happening now. There are more and more

hostilities, unfortunately, toward the United States, unless we get

this policy straight about the lethal use of drones and have

congressional oversight and debate and really exercise our

constitutional responsibility to really declare war, if that's what

we're going to do.

And so as we embark into this new age of modern warfare, we do need

rules. We need oversight; we need accountability; and we need to

develop an international legal framework on drones.

And we understand asymmetrical warfare and the new world in which we

live. None of us have our head in the sand about that. We just need to

make sure that Congress has a role in debating exactly how we're going

to, if we're going to, and when the appropriate use of force is

necessary.

For me, personally, I believe in SMART Security; and I know that that

will lead to a world that our children deserve and is worthy of our

children's future.

So let's put this decade of perpetual warfare behind us. We should

bring our troops home. We should invest in our veterans and our

children, create jobs here at home and really begin to invest in our

future for the sake of our children and our grandchildren.

I have this chart here to show you just in terms of the fiscal

implications of what these policies have brought. When you look at the

deficit, with the war and the economic policies of the Bush era, the

tax cuts, we're looking at this line right here. Had these unfortunate

policies not occurred, our deficit would be down here. This is very

clear. This was put forth by the Congressional Budget Office in

February. These are their estimates.

It's very clear, I hope, to everyone that the failed economic

policies of the Bush administration and the wars in Iraq are the major

contributing factors to the economic crisis that we find ourselves in.

And so, aside from the human toll that this 10-year war and the war in

Afghanistan has taken, we have a real crisis now, an economic crisis in

this country that we need to come to grips with. Our senior citizens

did not cause this crisis. Our children did not cause this crisis. The

poor, our middle class individuals, and families did not cause this

crisis. And we cannot forget what has taken place over the last 10

years of this unbelievably terribly sad time in our history, where we

lost so many lives and we lost so much time in terms of rebuilding our

country for the future of our children.

I yield back the balance of my time.