Mr. Speaker, on March 1, 2003, the United States stopped

fighting a war in Iraq and became the occupants of Iraq. That was when

the U.S. occupation began.

March 1, 2003, is the day that President Bush, speaking under a huge

banner with the words declared major combat

operations in Iraq had ended. At that moment, the United States

military should have left Iraq.

Military commanders and policy experts advised the President, but he

failed to grasp that deploying hundreds of thousands of soldiers to

Iraq and invading Baghdad would be like sticking your hand in a beehive

and trying to remove it without getting stung.

Even the President's father, President George H.W. Bush, agreed on

this point. That is why during the first Gulf War during 1991, he

stopped short of having the U.S. military actually enter Baghdad.

If we had left after, according to the President, the ``mission'' had

been ``accomplished,'' we could have prevented the deaths of over 2,400

American soldiers. More than 18,000 others wouldn't have returned home

with life-changing injuries, and thousands of others wouldn't suffer

from severe psychological trauma as a result of fighting a war halfway

across the world. And countless thousands, tens of thousands of

innocent Iraqi civilians who have been killed might still be alive in

Iraq.

The last 3\1/2\ years since the President's ``mission accomplished''

speech have been unsuccessful in all ways in Iraq. This war has drained

America's coffers of nearly $400 billion, money that could have been

used for underfunded programs right here at home, like addressing key

homeland security needs, providing health care to all Americans, giving

all American children a first-class education.

This war has diminished America's role as an international leader.

Our role and our image have suffered great damage as a result of our

involvement in Iraq. We are even less safe here at home, and Iraqis are

less safe in Iraq than before the United States invaded Iraq.

It is actually the very presence of 150,000 American soldiers in Iraq

that has enraged and dissatisfied the people of the Arab world.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a war; this is an occupation. The Pentagon

and the White House have turned our troops into occupiers against their

will, placing them in an absolutely impossible situation. This is not

what they were trained for. Soldiers can win a war, but how do they win

an occupation? An occupation is by its very nature unwinnable. There is

no winning; all you can do is come home.

The President does not seem to understand this truth which is made

very clear in comments he makes like

; or

''

Mr. Speaker, the American people understand that there is no such

thing as because it is not a job, it

is an occupation. What Congress needs to do is take back the powers it

gave to the President more than 3 years ago. It is time to rescind the

legislation that gave him the authority to use force in Iraq. And while

we are at it, let's do the right thing for our soldiers, their families

and the entire country: end the occupation.

The least we can do for our troops is thank them for their service

and bring them home to their families.