Mr. Speaker, perpetual war is expensive. We have been

militarily involved in the Persian Gulf region now for 20 years.

Experts have predicted that the cost of this continuous and expanding

war will reach $6 trillion.

The hostilities and our overt involvement in Iraq can be dated back

to January 16, 1991, when the defensive Operation Desert Shield became

the offensive Operation Desert Storm. Though the end of the Persian

Gulf war was declared on April 6, 1991, with a U.S. military victory,

the 20-year war was just beginning.

The U.S. and Britain have had an intense interest in controlling the

oil of the Middle East dating back to the overthrow of the Ottoman

Empire during World War I. This interest expanded during World War II

with FDR's promise to protect the puppet governments in the Persian

Gulf region, especially Saudi Arabia.

Though this arrangement never sat well with the citizens in the

region, a fairly decent relationship remained between the Arab people

and the American public. But animosity continued to build with our

ever-present military involvement in Iraq.

Our military assistance to the Mujahedeen in the 1980s, now the

Taliban, helped the Muslim defenders, one of whom was Osama bin Laden,

oust the Soviets from Afghanistan. At that time we were still not seen

as occupiers, and the radical Muslims, encouraged by the U.S., were

expected to direct all their efforts toward the Communist threat. That

all changed with the breakup of the Soviet system and the end of the

Cold War when, as the lone superpower left standing, we named ourselves

the world's policeman. It was then that the resentment by Arabs and

Muslims became directed toward the United States, now seen as an

invader and occupier.

Continuous bombing and crippling sanctions against Iraq during the

1990s, the appearance that the U.S. did not care about the plight of

the Palestinians, and our military bases in Saudi Arabia led to

attention-getting attacks against the United States. The 1998 embassy

attacks in Kenya and Tanzania and the attack on the USS Cole in the

year 2000 were warnings that the war was far from over. The horrible

tragedy of 9/11 shouldn't have been a surprise, and many believe it was

preventable.

Currently, the war has morphed into a huge battle for control of the

Persian Gulf region and central Asia. This involves Iraq, Afghanistan,

Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Iran. Foolish policies lead to foolhardy

conflicts. Foolhardy conflicts lead to unsustainable costs and a

multitude of unintended consequences. To name a few, we have spent

trillions of dollars based on the false pretense of defending freedom

and our Constitution. The notion has been further solidified that war

no longer needs to be declared by Congress and can be pursued as a

prerogative of the President. We are now seen by the world not as a

peacemaker, but rather a troublemaker and aggressor.

Thousands of American servicemembers have been killed and tens of

thousands wounded, with a sharp increase in service-connected suicides.

Over 500,000 veterans are seeking medical treatment and disability

benefits. Millions of citizens have been killed, wounded, and displaced

in the countries on the receiving end of our bombs, drones, sanctions,

and occupation. The region has suffered huge environmental damage as a

consequence of our military occupation.

Christians from Iraq have suffered the worst rout in the history of

Christendom. Iran and Iraq are now better allies than ever, with strong

anti-American sentiment. Iraqi political stability is a joke. Ending

hostilities in Afghanistan is a dream. China and Iran have been drawn

into a closer alliance against the United States. America's

uncontrolled deficits are senselessly fueled by needless militarism. We

are now much poorer and less safe. There was no al Qaeda in Iraq before

we invaded in 2003. Today there is. No weapons of mass destruction were

ever found in Iraq.

War always leads to government growth and the sacrifice of civil

liberties. In the past 10 years, this has been particularly costly to

us, with the acceptance of military tribunals, torture, assassinations,

abuse of habeas corpus, and PATRIOT Act-type legislation. Senseless war

and senseless destruction and death should not be rationalized as

providing a great service in protecting our freedoms, our Constitution,

or maintaining peace. The only value that can come of this is to

recognize that our policies are flawed and they need to be changed.

Without this, history will record that the sacrifices were all in vain.

A policy of peace, friendship, and trade is far superior to one of

occupation, entangling alliances, and sanctions which guarantee war. We

should pursue such a policy for moral reasons. But if we don't, we will

nevertheless be forced to change our ways for economic reasons. It's

time to bring our troops home.