Mr. Speaker, it has been almost 39 months since our

troops were sent to Iraq; and today, more than 37 months after the

President declared their mission accomplished, they are still there,

still fighting a guerrilla war for which they weren't properly trained

or equipped, still paying for the tragic blunders of their civilian

superiors, and still risking life and limb because of a security threat

that never even existed.

If American troops are still in Iraq at year's end, and,

unfortunately, it appears they might be, we will have been in Iraq

longer than these soldiers' grandfathers fought in World War II. The

difference is that that was a much different war, with a clearer

objective, a national consensus, a moral core, and a just cause.

Not only has Iraq not made us safer; it has actually harmed our

national security, making the United States an international pariah,

provoking the range of anti-American jihadists around the Muslim world,

and stoking the fires of an insurgency that gets stronger every day,

every day that we are in Iraq.

And that doesn't even take into account the staggering human cost,

the 2,500th American soldier killed just yesterday, more than 1,800

soldiers gravely wounded, thousands of others mentally and physically

traumatized by their combat experience, not to mention the countless

tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians who died for the cause of their

own so-called liberation.

Mr. Speaker, the sham resolution that the Republicans in Congress

brought to the floor yesterday and that we voted on just a few minutes

ago is yet another partisan divisive attempt to stay the course and to

link support for this war to support for our troops.

We could have debated particulars of a military disengagement. We

could have a substantive discussion that results in an actual change in

the Nation's Iraq policy. Instead, we did nothing more than a little

Kabuki dance that at the end of the day won't change a single thing

except to prove that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are

willing to distort the facts and use the war and our troops for

politics.

There is nothing inconsistent about having the deepest contempt for

the war, but the utmost admiration for the soldiers on the front lines.

Last fall, I traveled to Iraq and visited with our troops. My

conversations with them only confirmed what I already knew, that these

are uniquely loyal, intelligent, and courageous Americans. They

represent the very finest our country has to offer, and they deserve

our unyielding gratitude every hour of every day.

If only they had civilian leaders who were worthy of their service

and their sacrifice. If only the people who are running this war had

half the honor, half the integrity of the men and women who are

fighting it. It is because I support the troops that I have advocated

so passionately for their return home. And we can do that, and we can

do it without abandoning Iraq.

We must establish a multilateral security force to keep the peace in

Iraq

while shifting the U.S. role from military occupier to reconstruction

partner. This is what the American people want, Mr. Speaker. They want

to help Iraq rebuild and become a free democratic society, but they

want it done without another drop of American bloodshed. They want

their sons and daughters, they want their mothers and fathers, their

brothers and sisters, their friends and neighbors back home where they

belong.

What we need now is action from Washington, not platitudes and photo

opportunities, not inconsequential resolutions that require lawmakers

to risk absolutely nothing. The American people are looking to

Washington. They are begging for leadership. It is time this Congress

and the President of the United States provided some.