Madam Speaker, today I rise to deliver my 300th speech

on the floor of the House, speeches demanding an end to the occupation

of Iraq.

I take no pleasure in marking this milestone, except that in this

great democracy we have it is possible for one Member of the House to

stand here and express her opinions. But instead of pleasure, it deeply

saddens me, for it reminds me just how long the Iraq occupation has

been dragging on.

America's invasion and occupation of Iraq began 6 years ago this

month. On March 21, 2003, the previous administration gave us ``Shock

and Awe.'' There were big explosions on our TV sets, but innocent

people were being killed that night in Baghdad. And for the next 6

years, the body count continued to rise as Iraq became a hell on Earth.

Today conditions on the ground have improved, but the occupation goes

on. Over 140,000 American troops remain in harm's way. Over 100,000

military contractors continue to roam the streets of Iraq,

unaccountable to anyone but themselves. Military families continue to

suffer here at home and tens of thousands of veterans suffer from

injuries that will last a lifetime.

I voted against authorizing the use of force in Iraq, and I was the

first Member of Congress to introduce a resolution calling for the

withdrawal of our troops. For 6 years I have made the case that the

occupation makes no sense.

On February 2, 2005, I said on the floor of the House ``The sad irony

is that after our Nation was attacked on 9/11 by al Qaeda, (our)

response was to bomb and kill civilians in one of the few countries in

the Middle East that was inhospitable to al Qaeda.''

I also pointed out that the occupation wasn't making America any

safer. On March 19, 2007, I said, ``The rate of fatal terror attacks

worldwide was increased by a factor of seven since the Iraq war

began.''

And I noted that the occupation was bleeding our Treasury dry and

threatening our economy. On October 25, 2007, I said, ``It's incredible

to me that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, who lecture us

daily about fiscal constraints, (do) not make a peep about the fiscal

catastrophe'' of Iraq.

I also raised my voice over and over again to decry the other tragic

consequences of the occupation, which included the tragic loss of over

100,000 American and Iraqi lives, the refugee crisis, the torture at

Abu Ghraib and elsewhere, the shabby treatment of our veterans at

Walter Reed, the ``Mission Accomplished'' and weapons of mass

destruction fiascos, the manipulation of intelligence to create a false

cause for war, the cynical use of the 9/11 tragedy to justify military

action against Iraq that the Bush administration had been planning all

along, the scandal of sending our troops into battle without proper

body armor and the terrible damage to our Nation's moral standing and

reputation in the world.

I also spoke about the tremendous bravery and the skill of our troops

and the amazing courage of the mothers of section 60 at Arlington

National Cemetery, and I rose time and time again to offer a real

alternative to the occupation, a smart security plan, a plan that would

defeat terrorism without the need to wage immoral and unnecessary wars.

Most recently, I rose to declare that the current plan to leave

50,000 residual troops after August 2010 in Iraq is unacceptable. I

believe the best approach now is to withdraw all our troops by August

2010 and coordinate their removal with reconciliation and

reconstruction efforts, efforts to promote the unification of the Iraqi

people.

Madam Speaker, the occupation of Iraq violates America's core values

of peace, freedom and human rights. I will continue to raise my voice

on the floor of the House for these values until we bring all our

troops home to their families and the peace and sovereignty of Iraq is

restored.

I will also continue to raise my voice on this floor for a new and

better foreign policy based on diplomacy and peaceful international

cooperation.

I shall soon deliver speech number 301.