I certainly appreciate very much the gentleman yielding

to me.

Mr. Speaker, as you would guess, I am an American, a very proud

American. If I had selected my place of birth, I would have chosen the

United States of America. It is just full of

promise, full of democracy, full of patriotism.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to add my voice to the chorus of those who

have said enough is enough. The President has had the chance to plead a

case for victory in Iraq, but he has never clearly told us how or when

we are going to get to this turning point and when we will be able to

bring our soldiers home.

Twenty-three thousand troops injured, over 3,100 dead and not enough

armor to ensure that our healthy troops remain that way. I did not vote

for the war, and I don't bemoan the fact that I did not. But I did say

then, as I say now, that our soldiers did not have enough armor nor

equipment, and they did not have enough benefits at the time, and this

Congress has turned some of that around.

When we have soldiers on foreign soil depending on the kindness of

strangers for the donation of armor and helmets because their President

has failed to provide them with the life-saving tools after placing

them in harm's way, we know something is not right. We have stretched

ourselves too thin and used the awesome power of our military might in

the wrong way.

Mr. Speaker, our priorities are not straight. We have sent children

into harm's way, and if the President had his way, we would send more

recklessly into battle in Iraq without a clear exit plan or

understanding of their roles.

In Indiana alone, we have seen 76 Hoosiers lost to this and 511 whose

lives were forever altered by injuries sustained in this war.

Unfortunately, however, President Bush's interest in supporting our

troops ends the moment they become veterans. Because, as he asks for

more troops, he has cut the funding for the Veterans Administration to

help them return to civilian life healthy and prepare for what lies

ahead.

On May 1, 2003, the President announced, ``Mission accomplished.'' At

that time, we had lost 139. Yet over 3,000 have now died, and the

mission still has not been accomplished. We will not know the mission

has been accomplished until we have set the goals and benchmarks that

allow us to place Iraqis in a position of being self-governing and

allow our troops to come home.

In short, I love our troops. I love them dearly. I love our veterans,

and I love our country. It is time to begin to bring our loved ones

home from overseas and not send more into the hostile battlefields in

downtown Baghdad.

We often sing a song in church that goes, we are soldiers in the

army. We have to fight before we die. We have to hold up the

bloodstained banner. We have to hold it up until we die.

Let us not beat around the bush, so to speak. Our military presence

in Iraq cannot diminish the violence there. It will only add to it. We

have lost a lot of our support, a lot of our friendship with other

nations because of our reckless behavior in Iraq. So to stay there, our

military presence will increase violence there and bring on more around

the world.

They have suicide bombs; we have a suicide policy. And those who

started this madness, not being the young Americans they sent to be

slaughtered, strutted their vicarious, which is to say artificial,

heroism.

This bloody blunder was conceived in childish computer war-game

fantasy and executed in unconstitutionality, borrowing billions from

foreigners to borrow trouble from other foreigners, putting this land

we love into international hock and its prestige into an international

hodge-podge.

There are a lot of bad-guy dictators in this world, some of whom are

friends of this administration and one of whom was a friend of this

administration's forbearers. That one was Saddam Hussein. But John

Adams tells us, ``America does not go abroad in search of monsters to

destroy . . .''

When you realize you're making a mistake, sanity calls for stopping

it.