Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to commemorate a sad and

very tragic anniversary in our Nation's history. Five years ago today,

over my strong objections and the objections of many of my colleagues,

Congress voted to authorize the use of force against Iraq.

This campaign of shock and awe was a campaign that shocked us all. It

was hard to believe that this administration, based on what little

information they had, would move in and bomb and invade Iraq.

I often wonder what would have happened had the House approved the

amendment that I offered that would have allowed the United Nations

inspectors to finish their jobs. If my amendment had passed, and from

what I remember, there were about 72 ``yes'' votes on that amendment,

inspectors would have made it clear what we believed then and what the

world knows now, that there were no weapons of mass destruction in

Iraq. And how sad it was to see a great general, military man, then

Secretary of State, Secretary of State Colin Powell, go to the United

Nations and cherry-pick information to present to the world to try to

convince the world and to convince this Congress to vote to invade and

bomb Iraq.

Five years later, the President's failed policy in Iraq has claimed

the lives of more than 3,800 brave service men and women, nearly 30,000

wounded, and countless Iraqi civilians, and yet we heard many years ago

that the mission was accomplished.

This has cost us more than $400 billion, nearly a half trillion

dollars, with the President poised to ask for $200 billion more, and no

end in sight. The invasion and occupation of Iraq has undermined our

Nation's security and the security of the world.

Along with Congresswomen Lynn Woolsey and Maxine Waters, many of our

colleagues in the Progressive Caucus and in the Out of Iraq Caucus have

indicated that we in Congress have the power, and we know we have the

power, it is a constitutional mandate and requirement, to end the

President's failed policy in Iraq. And today, we worked together, over

the last few weeks, to put together the information so that this

morning we could release a poll today that shows that the American

people support us in doing this.

The President wants to pretend that Congress's only choice is to

provide funds that he has requested unconditionally or cut off funding

for our troops. This is a false choice, and we cannot buy into that

argument. We can use our constitutionally mandated appropriations power

to end his failed policy, to protect our troops and contractors, and to

bring them home. We have the power to fully fund redeployment, and that

is what we must do.

Our poll found that 70 percent of those surveyed rejected giving the

President further funding for Iraq without conditions, and people

favored requiring funds be spent on redeployment over providing the

administration funds without conditions. And this was by a 2-1 margin.

So, with the support of the American people, we will continue to build

support in Congress for fully funding redeployment.

We wrote to the President of the United States to indicate that that

is the only way he will get our vote for any funds for this very tragic

occupation and tragic civil war that we find ourselves in now. Now we

have maybe 86, 87 Members who have committed to this strategy because

they know that this is the only way we can end this.

The truth is, the President's ' strategy provides

an exit strategy really for him at the expense of our troops. It allows

him to run out the clock on his failed policy and to slip out the door,

to leave the American people holding the bag.

How many of our troops should die so that the President can save

face? How large of a sacrifice must we make of our children's and

grandchildren's future so that the President can avoid just admitting

that he was wrong?

The President is not going to take responsibility for this failed

policy, we've seen that and we know that now, so the Congress must. We

must act. And the best way for us to do that is to fully fund the safe,

timely, and responsible redeployment of our troops and contractors from

Iraq.

So on this somber anniversary, we must remind our colleagues of what

happened and how we got to this place; but also we must stand tall and

say we will bring our young men and women home, and we will end this

occupation soon.