Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Progressive Caucus and

the Out of Iraq Caucus sponsored a very important meeting this morning

to review the dire situation in Iraq and to explore ways to end the

occupation. At this event, we heard from Dr. William Polk, one of

America's leading experts on the Middle East.

Dr. Polk taught Middle Eastern history, politics, and Arabic at

Harvard before joining the U.S. State Department's Policy Planning

Council responsible for the Middle East and responsible for North

Africa. Later, he became professor of history and founding director of

the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Chicago.

Dr. Polk is the author of many books, including the recently

published book entitled,

To write the book, Dr. Polk studied insurgent movements throughout

world history. He found that they were motivated by many different

causes, including race, religion, culture, economics, and language, but

he found that they all had one thing in common, an opposition to

foreign occupation.

Dr. Polk's research has clear implications for our policy in Iraq. It

tells us that the American occupation of Iraq can never solve the

country's problems. Only the Iraqis can solve Iraqi problems. And it

tells us that the only policy that now makes sense is to withdraw our

troops in an orderly but rapid way, and couple that action with a

carefully constructed program that will help the Iraqis to pick up the

pieces and to rebuild their country with the help of the regional

international community.

The lesson of history is clear, Mr. Speaker; yet, our leaders in the

White House continue to follow a disastrous course of foreign

occupation. Their blindness has put our Nation on a very dangerous

course. The administration has called for an enduring relationship with

Iraq, meaning many years, perhaps even decades, of American military

involvement.

If the administration has its way, babies now in diapers will grow up

and march off to Baghdad while the neo-cons who crafted our Iraq policy

play golf in their retirement communities.

The administration's policy of endless occupation will cost us

trillions of dollars and countless casualties. It will lead to the

deaths of countless Iraqi civilians and surely force millions more to

become refugees. Meanwhile, al Qaeda will continue to hatch its plots

against the United States in their safe havens far from Iraq.

It is clear that Iraq will never stabilize and find peace while we

are present. Our occupation of Iraq prevents Iraqis from finding

solutions to their own problems, and it prevents the regional and

international diplomacy that is absolutely needed to help them

reconcile and to rebuild.

The timely withdrawal of American troops is the essential first step

in solving the Iraqi problem. So long as our troops and military

contractors are there, the situation can only and will only get worse.

In the days ahead, I and others will urge Congress to move to end the

occupation. Congress has the power of the purse. We must pass a bill

requiring that all spending related to Iraq be used for only one

purpose, and that is to fully fund the safe, orderly, and responsible

withdrawal of all American troops and military contractors.

If we fail to do this, we will have failed the American people, who

sent us to Congress last November with a clear message: End the

occupation of Iraq. And we will have failed our country morally, we

will have failed our country politically, and certainly we will have

failed it economically.

It is time, Mr. Speaker, to do what we know is right and what is best

for our country: bring our troops home.