I have a question to the author of the amendment and

to those who are supporting it on the other side.

In listening to your discussion, you seem to be in a posture of the

military--Navy in this case, and I suppose other branches--having

access to alternate fuels. You spoke specifically of coal-based fuels.

Are you speaking of all kinds of alternative fuels and that the

military should pursue those fuels so that they might be available to

pursue them in their development phase as well as when they are fully

developed?

Reclaiming my time, sir, in listening to your

discussion about the coal-based fuels, clearly those are in the

development stage; they're not yet in place. I would assume that in the

development stage, the U.S. military would be purchasing those for the

purposes of testing as well as providing an early market, a development

market, for those fuels. Therefore, I would assume that that same logic

would apply to other kinds of biofuels, would it not?

I yield to the gentleman.

Well, reclaiming my time, and thank you, sir, for the

information.

The point here is that in the early development of all of these

fuels, whether they are coal-based or other kinds of biofuels, there is

a higher cost in the early stages that presumably and hopefully and, in

fact, must be reduced if the Navy is to procure those fuels for the

normal utilization of their fleet, or whatever the fuel might be used

for. Therefore, in listening to your discussion, which I do support, I

think it's important to understand that in the early development there

is going to be a higher cost which could not and should not carry

forward for the normal use of those fuels.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. Chairman, this amendment is offered by Mr. Jones

and myself. The current Overseas Contingency Operation budget is based

on the assumption that we will have 68,000 troops in Afghanistan

throughout the entire fiscal year 2013. However, this is not the plan

that our Commander in Chief has put forth, nor is it the plan that many

of us who would like to see the war come to a quick end would support.

As President Obama has repeatedly stated, we are winding down this

war. After withdrawing the surge troops by the end of this summer, that

will bring us to 68,000 troops at the beginning of the 2013 fiscal

year. We will continue to bring our troops home from Afghanistan, and I

quote the President, ``at a steady pace.''

This amendment captures the billions of dollars that we will save by

pursuing this steady drawdown of troops, as opposed to maintaining

troop levels at 68,000 throughout the entire fiscal year 2013, and then

presumably, on October 1, bring 28,000 troops home.

This amendment would cut $12.67 billion from the Overseas Contingency

Fund.

Let me be clear about what this amendment does not do. It does not

cut funding for troops on the ground in Afghanistan. I believe, as do

all of my colleagues who have advocated for an accelerated end to this

war, that our troops in harm's way should have all the resources they

need to safely execute their mission. And I am committed to ensuring

that our troops on the ground have the best equipment and the

compensation that they deserve.

This amendment does cut the OCO funds that are unneeded and would not

be used if we pursue the President's steady drawdown plan. In these

fiscal times, stringent as they are, we should not be paying for things

that we're not going to buy and that we don't need, and we certainly

don't need to further pad the OCO budget.

The committee has already approved an extra $3.25 billion cushion on

the OCO fund that was not even part of the President's request. We have

already spent half a trillion dollars of taxpayer dollars on the war in

Afghanistan, and the Department of Defense can't even account for many

of those funds, lost due to contractor fraud or Afghan corruption.

When we take into account the long-term costs of this war, such as

servicing our debt and caring for the wounded warriors, the costs are

even more staggering.

Many of us support a quicker timeline of withdrawing troops from

Afghanistan than the President has proposed. After a decade of war, we

recognize that our core national security objectives have been met in

Afghanistan and that there is no U.S. military solution to the

remaining challenges in the Afghanistan nation.

We began our military operations in Afghanistan to eliminate those

international terrorist organizations that threaten the United States.

Thanks to the remarkable bravery and competency of our men and women in

uniform, al Qaeda has been virtually eliminated from Afghanistan;

terrorist training camps have been demolished; and Osama bin Laden is

dead. Thousands have given their lives to accomplish this, and tens of

thousands have suffered life-altering wounds. It is now time for our

troops to come home.

It is also time for this House not to waste further money. This

amendment is not about ending the war. It is about reducing the deficit

by $12.67 billion. We can do that by capturing the billions of dollars

saved by the President's proposed troop drawdown and by redirecting

those funds towards reducing the deficit and by bolstering our fiscal

security here at home.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

I thank the gentleman.

My apologies to Mr. Jones who was about to stand up and speak on this

issue.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your sincerity and your extraordinary work

on the issue--a very, very difficult issue. I share with you the

obvious compassion that you have for our troops--those who are there

and those who have been wounded. However, if I might pose a question:

The Commander in Chief, who presumably had the advice of the generals

on the ground and in the Pentagon, has stated clearly that at the

beginning of the next fiscal year, which would be October 1 of this

year, there would be 68,000 troops on the ground in Afghanistan and

that there would be a steady drawdown, or a steady pace, so that at the

end of the fiscal year there would be some 40,000 troops, which would

be September 30, 2013. Now, a steady drawdown would assume that you

would take 28,000 troops, and you would remove them on a steady basis

so that, over the course of that year, you would have half the troops

in the country and the other half would be gone. That being the case,

you don't need to budget for all 68,000 being there the entire year. In

fact, you budget for something between 40,000 and 68,000. However, the

appropriation that we have before us actually assumes that all 68,000

are going to be there until October 1 of 2013. That's not what the

President has said. That's apparently not what the generals are

planning and what the planning and execution is.

So what this amendment simply does is to recognize what it is that

the generals intend to do as commanded by the Commander in Chief. Now,

we may disagree with that, but the advice just given to me by the

chairman is that we ought to pay attention to the generals, who are

apparently saying a steady drawdown. There is $12.5 billion at stake

here, and what we are trying to do is to capture that. Now, at least

there would be concern that something would go awry and that the

drawdown wouldn't occur. The appropriation actually places a $3.2

billion cushion for unexpected contingencies.

So what are we doing here? Do we care about the deficit or not? My

amendment simply speaks to: let's be wise with the taxpayers' money.

Let's not appropriate money that should not or is not apparently going

to be necessary, and if there is a contingency, there is a $3 billion

cushion built into this budget and into this appropriation already.