Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my deep concern about the

military campaign in Libya, one that has been underway the last week

and a half.

First off, it's distressing to once again see that Congress's power

has been so casually disregarded in our role and responsibility

regarding war. There should have been a robust debate in this Chamber

about the proper course of action in Libya. The American people deserve

it. The Constitution mandates it.

The President gave a fine speech Monday night, as he certainly does,

but I found him more eloquent than persuasive. I'm not satisfied that

he has made a thorough case for military action against Libya. There

are still too many unanswered questions.

What is our responsibility now?

Where does our commitment end?

Does the Pottery Barn rule apply in Libya? If we break it do we own

it?

I'm not comforted by the fact that NATO is now in charge of this

mission because the fact is, the United States is the dominant force

within NATO. Any NATO-led operation is one in which we still bear an

enormous responsibility.

And then there's the cost. The Pentagon has acknowledged that it's

already spent $550 million on the Libya operation. That's after 1\1/2\

weeks, Mr. Speaker. The bill to the taxpayer could easily climb over $1

billion. And, Mr. Speaker, at a time when we're already spending close

to $7 billion a month on a failed military occupation in Afghanistan;

this, at a time when my friends in the majority want to snap the purse

shut on so many important programs the American people need.

There is unquestionably, unquestionably a humanitarian crisis in

Libya. I'm appalled, as we all are, about Qadhafi's brutality against

his own people. But I fear that that operation will set a dangerous

precedent and send us sliding down a slippery slope.

We can't afford to head down a path of perpetual U.S. military

engagement around the world. With developing situations in Syria, the

Ivory Coast, Congo, Yemen, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, we can't

give up on diplomatic and humanitarian efforts in favor of guns and

bombs everywhere there's violence and unrest.

We're already fighting two wars in the Middle East. Is that not

enough? Have we learned nothing over the last decade? Have we learned

nothing about the danger of open-ended military conflicts where the

exit strategy is unclear and victory is ill-defined?

The war in Afghanistan is sapping America of its strength in so many

ways. It has cost us in precious taxpayer dollars and has cost us more

than 1,500 of our bravest people. And it is costing us credibility and

moral authority in ways that can't even be measured yet or quantified

every single day.

The time is now, Mr. Speaker, for less war, not more. Let's stop,

let's turn, and let's insist that we don't turn Libya into another

black hole. Let's bring our troops home from Afghanistan, and let's

give our children a future of peace.