Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from

Connecticut for yielding, and I thank him also for his leadership in

organizing these very important discussions on the administration's

failed policy with respect to Iraq, and for that matter the

administration's failed policy with respect to the conduct of our

foreign affairs in general.

It is a subject that we discuss all too infrequently in this Chamber.

Let me just pick up on the point that Mr. Larson just made. It was 4 1/

2 years ago that the President came into this Chamber to deliver his

State of the Union Address for 2002.

It was in that address that he first characterized North Korea and

Iran and Iraq as the Axis of Evil. And I think it is without argument,

without debate today, that all three of those states present this

country, our country, with greater threats to our safety and security

than they did when they were first characterized as the axis of evil,

and that is because we have embarked on a failed strategy in Iraq that

has bogged us down, that is apparently without end, without success,

and yet prevents us, because of our preoccupation with Iraq and because

of the troop strength that has been needed in Iraq and prevents us from

dealing with the threat that is now posed and was posed at the time by

North Korea and the threat that was posed and is now posed by Iran.

Let me also comment on something that Mr. Delahunt from Massachusetts

said repeatedly, the war in Iraq has been characterized as the

centerpiece of the war on terror. It is frankly not at all the

centerpiece on the war on terror. It is a diversion from the war on

terror. It is a diversion that does not serve either the country well

or serve our allies well.

We have a foreign policy, it seems to me, that is rooted in ideology

as opposed to pragmatism, and we are learning the limits of applying

that ideology as we deal unsuccessfully with the situation in North

Korea and the situation in Iran.

We see the Middle East in flames as we speak, and we recognize that

we have a long history that nothing good happens in the conflict

between Israel and the Palestinian territories unless the United States

is intimately involved in being an honest broker to bring about

resolution of vexing and difficult issues.

Let me share just a couple of statistics that I think speak to just

how far off track we are in Iraq. The number of insurgents in 2003 was

5,000. Today that number stands at 20,000. I am sure we all remember

when the insurgency was described as a few dead-enders.

I am sure we all remember when the Secretary of Defense rather

dismissively described what was happening in Iraq by saying that

``freedom is messy.''

We now have a situation where those dead-enders, so to speak, have

metastasized into 20,000 insurgents. The average number of daily

attacks has risen in just 1 year from 53 to 75. This does not sound

like an insurgency that is in its final throes, and yet that is what we

were told.

The number of civilian casualties resulting from sectarian violence

has increased by 600 per month, now to a total of nearly 1,600 lost

innocent lives per month. That is the equivalent of a 9/11 every 2

months in Iraq. Would any one of us stand for that if that were

happening in this country? We certainly would not. Yet the carnage

continues, and sectarian violence has increased dramatically over this

period of time.

Financially, the burn rate has doubled from nearly $4 billion per

month to $8 billion per month over the past 2 years, and I am sure we

all remember how dismissively the administration handled the early

estimates of the war. When Mr. Lindsey first said it would be $100- to

$200 billion that was dismissed out of hand, and we were told that it

would be no more than $50- or $60 billion for the war. We are now $300

billion and counting, as I say, with no end in sight.

We all wish that we could believe the administration's happy talk

with respect to stability taking hold, with respect to progress being

made. But we are now 3 1/2 years into this tragic conflict, and we are

no closer to the goal of an Iraqi state that does not pose threats to

the safety and security of this Nation.

Madam Speaker, if the gentleman would yield,

I would just like to expand on a point that the gentlewoman from

California made. She talked about the report in today's New York Times

that Sunni leadership is now asking American troops to stay to deal

with the sectarian violence, and it points out the folly, if you will,

of what purports to be our exit strategy.

I mean, the President has said repeatedly that as the Iraqi Army

stands up, then we will stand down. We have now stood up a significant

number of Iraqi soldiers and law enforcement officers, and yet here we

have the Sunni leadership, which has been adamantly opposed to our

presence in the country, adamantly opposed to our occupation of the

country, now asking us to stay.

And so what does that suggest? It suggests that we do not have an

exit strategy at all, or the one that has been put out there by the

President is one that has absolutely no chance of yielding any kind of

beneficial result in Iraq.