Mr. Speaker, again we come to the floor

this evening as part of what we have come to call the Iraq Watch. And

first and foremost, as my distinguished colleagues have in previous

occasions, I note that we want to distinguish first and foremost the

war from the warriors.

The men and women who serve this great country of ours deserve our

unending respect and support for the kind of valor, the kind of job

that they perform on a regular basis. Having said goodbye to far too

many of them, many in our Reservists and National Guards who have been

deployed, redeployed, deployed and then redeployed again, it is gut

wrenching and heartrending to see what their families are going

through. And so our thoughts and prayers are always with them, along

with the support of this Congress.

I further would like to say that it is important to distinguish the

war from the warriors so that we have an opportunity to lay out policy

for the American public. I want to start this evening with a policy

that I believe sends a very strong message to the men and women who

wear the uniform and their families here at home that are caring for

them and caring about them.

We have introduced a resolution that directs the President to send a

clear message to the Iraqi Government that during this time of

insurrection, a time when the Pew poll most recently indicates that 47

percent of the Iraqi people believe that it is okay and justifiable to

kill American soldiers, it is unacceptable; and we must send a clear

message to the Iraqi Government that American soldiers who have been

killed, maimed, wounded, kidnapped, tortured, that we will not, in any

shape, manner or form, tolerate amnesty for those who have perpetrated

those acts against these brave men and women.

In my humble estimation, there is no reason why this shouldn't be a

bipartisan resolution. We have over 100 Democratic signatures on the

bill. We would like to get this bill passed before we adjourn for the

August recess. We have been able to bring so many incidental bills to

this floor by unanimous consent. Surely we can bring a bill to the

floor that sends a clear message to our troops that we are putting the

Iraqi Government on notice that it is not okay to kill, maim, kidnap,

torture American men and women in our armed services.

And so it is my sincere hope, and we have had some overtures from the

other side of the aisle, but so far, no movement. And this should be a

nonpartisan issue where we bring this resolution to the floor and take

it up and pass it, and send it on to the President so that he can send

a very clear message.

More important than sending a clear message to the Iraqis is also

sending a message to our troops that we here in this country stand

behind them and their sacrifice that they have made and will not see

this all go for naught being waived with an amnesty provision in the

midst of an insurrection of paramount proportions that is currently

going on within Iraq.

So I want to start there. And then I would like to quickly just segue

to a quote. This quote was put together by Graham Allison, and Mr.

Allison is a Harvard professor who had this to say that ``with regard

to the current situation that we face in Iraq, it is clear that we have

diverted essential resources from the fight against al Qaeda. We have

allowed the Taliban to regroup in Afghanistan, fostered neglect of the

Iranian nuclear threat, undermined alliances critical to preventing

terrorism, devastated America's standing with every country in Europe,

and destroyed it with the Muslim world.''

Mr. Allison goes on to say: ``Are we any safer today from the threat

of nuclear attack, especially by way of a dirty bomb, than we were on

September the 11?'' His conclusion is, no. And he says: ``It can be

summed up in one word as to the reason why we are not safer: Iraq.''

And with that, let me acknowledge and yield to my distinguished

colleague from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt), who has, from the outset

of this war, through public forums and discussion, been on record of

having protested the sending of our troops into Iraq.

Well, to your point, you know, if we go

back to the outset of the invasion of Iraq, we can trace it back to the

summer of 2002, with the President's address at West Point, where he

announced the doctrine of preemption and unilateralism. And as you will

recall, who were the staunchest critics of the President at the time?

It was not Senator Kennedy. It was not Senator Byrd. It wasn't Bill

Delahunt or Jim McDermott or Maxine Waters or myself. It was Scowcroft,

Eagleberger, Baker, Kissinger, because they understood the perils

present in this kind of foreign policy, to abandon the precepts of

Casper Weinberger and saying the United States should never enter into

a military conflict unless its vital interests are threatened. And we

knew that that was not the case, and the Powell corollary to that which

is, if we go in, we go in with overwhelming force and secure the

country.

We did not.

Because of the word of Ahmad Chalabi. So

what has become the Chalabi-Cheney nexus has led us into this quagmire

that we find ourselves into today. And as you point out, we have

diverted the necessary funds that are needed to combat terrorism.

We still do not have Osama bin Laden or Mullah Omar. They are still

at large. And we need to make sure that if we are going to send a

strong message around the world that this kind of terrorist act will

not be tolerated, that we refocus and regroup.

It is also pointed out in several articles over this weekend that we

still can prevail in Afghanistan if we put the resources there and

support President Karzai and make sure that we regroup and redetermine

our effort to put down the Taliban and to focus on weeding out those

elements of al Qaeda that still exist along the Pakistani border and

throughout Afghanistan that has become once again overwhelmed with

warlords.

Reclaiming my time, I thank you, Mr.

Delahunt, for your comments; and as you point out, we have been joined

by several of our esteemed colleagues. Maxine Waters has been in the

forefront of making sure that the message continues to get out across

this Nation with regard to the current situation in Iraq. She has been

forthright in leading the Out of Iraq Caucus in the Democratic Caucus,

and also has embraced wholeheartedly Jack Murtha's proposal.

And, with that, I yield to the gentlewoman from California.

Reclaiming my time, when you say ``poppy

fields,'' you are referring to drug trafficking, correct?

I thank the gentlewoman for her comments,

and I would like to further substantiate what she had to say before

about the trafficking of narcotics, especially opium poppies. Since

2001, it increased from 200 metric tons to over 4,200 metric tons in

just 2004.

And our colleague from Maryland, Mr. Van Hollen, has written in the

Washington Post and, I think, given very insightful comment on the

situation in Afghanistan; and I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, once again the gentleman from

Maryland is so on point with his comments. I would like to read some

remarks by former assistant Secretary of State James Rubin. He says

that the Bush administration, that they have allowed Afghanistan to

become the forgotten front on the war on terrorism, the forgotten front

on the war on terrorism.

As the gentleman from Maryland pointed out, these were the

individuals who took down the World Trade Center, who hit the Pentagon,

and but for the bravery of the people on board that heroic flight, the

other plane ended up in Pennsylvania, in the fields of Pennsylvania.

Afghanistan is the central front on the war on terror, and yet this

administration does not have a long-term strategy for success in this

crucial fight. They have allowed a war of choice in Iraq to distract

from our critical mission in Afghanistan, a point the gentleman from

Maryland articulated earlier.

Mr. Speaker, the parallels of history are

so important, and to think now as you point out so well that we have

nearly abandoned the effort in Afghanistan and find ourselves imperiled

in Iraq, much in the same way Russia found itself imperiled in

Afghanistan, with the rest of the world watching as we continue to

expend our resources, over $400 billion, and our most precious of all

resources, the men and women who serve this country; and in the

meantime, Afghanistan has become the forgotten front on terrorism,

something the gentleman from Maine knows about as well as anybody in

this great body of ours, and I yield to him.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from

Maine, as always, for his very thoughtful comments; and I want to make

a statement consistent with what the gentlemen from Maryland and

Massachusetts have said and ask the gentleman from Washington State to

join us as well.

But clearly, as the gentleman from Maine points out, our continued

presence in Iraq only helps to fuel the insurgency and prolong

instability between Iraq's regional and sectarian factions. Instead,

our Nation needs a new direction that redeploys our forces to win the

war in Afghanistan, tracks down key al Qaeda leaders, and refocuses on

fighting the war on terror, something the gentleman from Maryland

articulated so well.

Instead, we get nonbinding resolutions that come to this floor when

virtually this entire Chamber was united in the effort to make sure

that we went after those criminals who perpetrated the acts of

September 11, and instead, we have abandoned this front in Afghanistan.

Astoundingly, as the gentleman from Maryland points out, the CIA is

disbanding the unit that was focused on going after Osama bin Laden and

allowed the Taliban to continue to regroup in Afghanistan. Talk about

cut and run. Where is the debate on this issue?

On the front line of terrorism, as Ms. Waters pointed out, with what

we know is a regrouping of the Taliban, and where we know the funding

of terrorism comes from the source of opium trade and that it is

allowed to flourish and, in fact, expand and grown since 2001, it is

time for a change in policy.

With that, I will yield to the gentleman from Maryland for remarks

and then we will go over to the gentleman from Washington State.

The gentleman from Washington State makes

a very good point when he says, as the viewers all across this country

tune in, and they see people coming down to this floor and speaking

from their hearts and their heads about the situation we find in here,

the one thing we want the people of this country to know is that the

main purpose that we come down to this floor is because of love of

country.

The gentleman from Washington State loves his country, as do the

gentlemen from Massachusetts and Maryland. And yet we found ourselves

in this situation here where oftentimes our voices are muffled. We do

not get an opportunity, even in a nonbinding resolution, to present our

alternative point of view. This is a one-party town where the other

side of the aisle, our erstwhile Republican colleagues, control the

Presidency and all of its agencies and both Houses of these Chambers.

And it is because of love of country and a concern to make sure, as

we said from the outset, that we distinguish the warrior from the war,

that we have an obligation to come to the floor and speak truth to

power.

That is why I commend all of you for coming down to the floor, as you

have since the outset of this war. And again pointing out this evening

that we need a new direction, a thoughtful, provocative direction that

all of you have expressed this evening. Articulated by the gentlemen

from Maryland and Maine and Massachusetts and Washington is the sense

that the American people intuitively understand this and are yearning

for their Nation to leave. But our inability in the minority to break

through causes us to come here evening after evening in the hope, in

the silence of this great hall, in this great room, that our message

reaches out across this Nation and is heard by people who love this

country.

Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle love their country as

well. But our patriotism and our belief in this Nation stem from the

fact that we are a nation configured through the rule of law.

And that is why I am so proud to stand here with each and every one

of you this evening. Thank you so much for again coming out for Iraq

Watch.