Thank you so very much, Mr. Larson, for yielding and for

organizing this special order.

I certainly did come to the floor today to talk about what is going

on in Iraq, but as I sat here and I listened to you in this colloquy

that you have about what is going on in Afghanistan, I cannot help but

join you and commend you for forcing some attention on the fact that we

are going backwards in Afghanistan.

It is shameful, because we did abandon the struggle in Afghanistan

and took our resources in a direction where we were supposed to have

been finding and bringing to the bar of justice Osama bin Laden. And as

we look at what is happening, we find that Mr. Karzai is simply

isolated in Kabul and that he cannot even move around, that with all of

the protection that we are providing, his life is in danger.

The Taliban is growing stronger every day; and we told our

government, we told this administration, that the poppy fields were

beginning to multiply in Afghanistan. And I have to tell you, this

administration has turned a blind eye to the fact that the poppy fields

are just overflowing. As a matter of fact, it seems as if we even

understood and we allowed the poppy fields to become a source of

revenue for somebody. The warlords have basically divided up the

territories, and they all have their own plots and acreage, and they

all are earning money; and we are about to lose again in Afghanistan.

That is what I am referring to, absolutely. And I am so

glad that you are making it plain.

The fact of the matter is, the growing and cultivating of poppy seeds

in Afghanistan is the drug trade that is flowing off into that Pakistan

border that we cannot seem to get under control. We have this so-called

great relationship with Mr. Musharraf in Pakistan. But guess what?

While he is talking to us and we are funding him and we are so-called

cooperating, he tells us there is nothing he can do about the

lawlessness on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. And it is

believed by everybody that that is where Osama bin Laden really is. And

so I do not know who our friends are anymore in that region.

Having said that, I think you rightfully identified that we directed

the resources away from Afghanistan and we went into this so-called war

in Iraq because we were after Osama bin Laden, and we created this war

on terrorism. And we led the American people to believe, the President

did, that somehow, by doing this, we were going to get a handle on

terrorism, we were going to capture Osama bin Laden, and everything was

going to be all right.

But I come here this evening as the Chair of the 72-member Out of

Iraq Caucus. For more than a year, we have been working to conclude our

involvement in Iraq and to bring our soldiers home. We did not believe

this war was justified. In fact, many of us believed that the

administration's so-called evidence justifying the war was truly

exaggerated and very misleading. Furthermore, the administration's

handling of this war has severely undermined our efforts in Iraq, and

our service members are the ones that have

paid and continue to pay the price for this mismanagement. It is long

past time to bring our troops home and reunite them with their

families.

Mr. Speaker, the violence in Iraq is almost beyond comprehension.

Every day we hear about killings, bombings, kidnappings, and other

forms of violence that create chaos throughout Iraq. Today's headline

says it all. Let me give you an example: ``Baghdad Jolted by Sectarian

Killing Sprees and Bombings,'' the L.A. Times; ``Scores of Sunnis

Killed in Baghdad,'' the Washington Post; ``Baghdad Erupts in Mob

Violence,'' the New York Times; and ``Fifteen Killed in Iraq Bombings,

Shootings,'' the Associated Press.

Unfortunately, today is no different than any other day in Iraq. The

violence continues and scores of individuals are violently killed or

injured. In today's version of the daily carnage, two car bombs

exploded, claiming the lives of at least seven people and wounding 17

others.

Yesterday, Shiite gangs killed 36 Sunnis. Most of these victims were

killed execution style, and several showed signs of torture. Later the

same day, in retaliation, Sunnis detonated two car bombs, which killed

at least 19 people, wounded 59, and damaged a Shiite mosque.

And we are saying, maybe, it is about to be a civil war? Mr. Larson,

I submit to you, there is a civil war going on in Iraq today.

Last week, a bomb exploded in Sadr City, one of the Shiite sections

of Baghdad, killing 62 people and injuring more than 100 others. It was

the deadliest attack since Iraq's new government headed by Prime

Minister al Maliki took office in May. Almost 1,600 Iraqis were killed

in June, 16 percent more than in May.

The violence has claimed the lives of more than 1,000 Iraqis per

month since February. In fact, statistics compiled by the Iraqi

Government indicate that the rate of killing in Iraq has increased

since the death of Abu Musab al Zarqawi in June, something President

Bush declared would be a turning point in the Iraq war.

Sadly, the number of U.S. servicemembers who have died continues to

grow as well. As of today, 2,541 U.S. troops have died in Iraq; more

than 18,700 have been injured.

The violence and death has gone on long enough. It is time to

redeploy our troops out of Iraq and refocus our efforts on the war on

terrorism, something this administration has neglected.

The Out of Iraq Caucus believes that Congressman John Murtha's

resolution, H.J. Res. 73, is the strongest plan to conclude the war and

permit our soldiers to return to their loved ones.

Mr. Larson, I thank you for yielding. Let me just conclude by saying

this: You and others are here on the floor this evening, as you have

come time and time again. The news media on Sunday mornings on most of

the corporate media shows do not get the kind of conversation that we

are having here today. They do not get this kind of conversation

because they are not willing to listen to the voices that are

challenging the President and the establishment in this total way that

we do. They like to have it nuanced: I voted for the war and perhaps it

has not been managed the way that it should have been managed, but we

cannot get out. We have got to stay the course.

The news media is not willing to hear what we are saying. And so the

people out there who are trying to get the information, who are trying

to listen to what we are all saying, just do not have all the

opportunities because over and over again they are using the talking

heads and the voices of people who are not here nor there, but

somewhere in the middle, who are not willing to say that we have to

bring our troops home.

Finally, I am a Democrat, and I cherish my involvement in this party,

and I think I know what we stand for. And I think I know what so many

people have sacrificed for and have fought for. We have an election

going on, and I know people sometimes do not have the courage to take

the tough position, but in not doing so, we are watching our tremendous

resources being just used up on this misplaced war.

Our soldiers are at risk in more than one way. These young people,

19, 18, 20 years old, have never been out of their hometowns before,

who do not know a Sunni from a Shiite from a Kurd, are given the most

sophisticated weapons and told to shoot anything that moves. And when

they do, we talk about how horrible it is.

This is a mess. This is unconscionable. Not only are we misusing the

American taxpayers' money, not only are we placing Americans more at

risk, but we are also sacrificing our young people in more ways than

one.

So I thank you for the opportunity to share this evening with you.