Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. Skelton for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, the mission in Iraq has been plagued from the start by

poor intelligence, by poor planning for the post-war, and by disdain

for the advice from our allies and even our officials. Ignoring the

Army's Chief of Staff, the Secretary of Defense deployed too few

troops, failing to foresee the insurgency that followed the war. Many

of those deployed were not properly equipped with body armor or armored

vehicles, forced to improvise in the field. The troops were assigned

duty that they were not trained for. But let me add here they have

performed magnificently. They rose to the challenge. They showed they

still have that GI genius for field expedience. They improvised.

But the lack of planning and the lack of preparation has cost us

dearly; 2,514 Americans have paid the ultimate price: they have died.

17,774 have been seriously wounded.

Since this is the end of the debate, let me go to the bottom line.

First of all, let me say the most important cost we have incurred is

for the precious lives that were lost, 2,514; 1,774 who were wounded.

But the costs also are considerable. They are not a determinant,

obviously. We have troops in the field and are unstinting in our

support of them. But when the costs run into hundreds of billions of

dollars, they have to be considered.

Here is what the cost of the first Persian gulf war was: $61 billion.

Of that our allies chipped in in kind $10.6 billion, in cash $48

billion. The total cost to the United States out of pocket was $2.1

billion. That is what happens when you form a real coalition and have

allies and do not go it alone.

Here is what happens when you go it alone. This has been the

ascending cost of the war in Iraq, Iraqi Freedom: starting out at $51

billion, it rose to $77 billion in 2004, to $87 billion in 2005, and to

$100.4 billion this year, the estimated cost. And here is what the cost

per month is: $8.4 billion. That is what the current cost works out to.

That is a burn rate in Pentagon jargon; $8.4 billion a month is the

cost of the war currently.

Finally, adding all of that up, through the year 2006, you can see

that the cost of Operation Iraqi Freedom has been $318.5 billion. The

cost is not the determinant. We can afford whatever it takes to defend

this country. We want to be, as I said, unstinting in support of our

troops. But when the cost gets to be $318 billion, $8.4 billion a

month, it has to be a consideration. And that is similarly what we are

saying tonight.

The President spoke several weeks ago and said that probably his

successor in 2010 would be the person who decides whether or not and

when American troops would be redeployed. He did not even mention the

cost of the current undertaking. It is not just a dollar cost. It is an

opportunity cost. For every dollar consumed here is a loss of dollars

otherwise that could be spent on modernization and on the

transformation of our forces.

Last year when we passed the Defense Authorization Act for 2006, the

House and Senate, and the President by signing the bill, enacted a

provision that 2006 would be the year of transition, when Iraqi troops

would begin to take primary responsibility.

This is simply what we are calling on the President to do, to begin

moving us in that direction as we resolved we should have done last

year, particularly in view of the cost.