I thank the gentleman, Mr. John Larson, for yielding me

time and for organizing this special order.

It is so important that we continue daily to help the American people

understand exactly what is going on in this Congress. Time out for

tricks. Time out for maneuvering. Time out for all of that. And I am so

pleased that John Larson organized this Special Order tonight so that

we can clarify what is going on here in America.

I rise as the Chair of the Out of Iraq Caucus. The caucus has 72

members, who for more than a year have been fighting to conclude the

war in Iraq and reunite our troops with their families.

Over the weekend the New York Times reported that General Casey met

with President Bush to discuss redeploying U.S. troops from Iraq.

According to the New York Times, the number of U.S. troops in Iraq will

decline by two brigades by not replacing two brigades that are

currently scheduled to leave Iraq this year. Further reductions in U.S.

personnel will occur next year. The number of brigades in Iraq is

expected to drop from 14 to about five by the end of 2007. The Casey

plan also provides for a brigade to be kept on alert in Kuwait ``in

case American commanders need to augment their forces to deal with a

crisis. Another brigade will be kept on a lesser state of alert

elsewhere but still prepared to deploy quickly.'' According to the

Times, carrying out the terms of this plan depends on developments on

the ground in Iraq.

Now, why don't we just tell it like it is? This is basically the

Murtha plan. This plan is so similar to a plan that the Out of Iraq

Caucus has been pushing since late last year, the Murtha plan, H.J.

Res. 73.

Under Congressman Murtha's plan, no additional U.S. troops will be

sent to Iraq and the U.S. troops now deployed in Iraq will be

redeployed out of Iraq at a point determined by U.S. generals in Iraq,

which is very similar to the plan outlined by General Casey. The Murtha

resolution also calls for a contingent of marines to remain in the

Middle East to respond to threats that threaten to destablize our

allies in the region or the national security of the United States,

again mirroring the Casey plan.

Finally, the resolution calls for the United States to pursue

security and stability in Iraq through diplomacy. Again, the Times

reports that the General Casey plan is to engage the Iraqi Government

to develop a plan to turn security over to the Iraqis.

With nearly identical parameters, it appears that the administration

proposes to carry out a plan that has already been introduced, debated,

pushed by Mr. Murtha himself and by the Out of Iraq Caucus and many

members of this Democratic caucus. It is confusing to understand why

then there was such outrage from the Republicans during the debate of

H. Res. 861 two weeks ago during which members of the Out of Iraq

Caucus called for all Members of Congress to support the Murtha plan.

The only conclusion is that the Republicans are again playing politics

with the safety of our Nation.

Instead of holding a free and open debate on Iraq, they crafted a

resolution, H. Res. 861, to intentionally mislead the American people

and seize an opportunity to attack Democrats who want accountability

for those who led the march to war in Iraq. Democrats are also

demanding that the President provide a clear plan that will allow for

the redeployment of U.S. troops and permit them to return home to their

loved ones.

The Out of Iraq Caucus can support the proposed Casey plan. It is our

plan. It is the Murtha plan. It is the plan that we have been pushing

all along. Their plan we do not disagree with. We just wanted them to

have some leadership. They had made so many mistakes, so many mishaps,

as Condoleezza Rice called it, that we kept urging them to come up with

a plan. We are glad they have adopted the Murtha plan.

According to news reports, the implementation of this plan will begin

just prior to the November elections. The next step will be completed

as the 2008 Presidential elections are heating up, providing the

President an opportunity to claim progress despite more than 3 years of

mismanagement and incompetence.

Mr. Speaker, this war was mismanaged by this administration. The men

and women in uniform have paid for that mismanagement, more than 2,500

with their own lives. It is long past time to bring our troops home,

and I will not rest until our service men and women are able to return

home to their loved ones.

Be clear. We are glad that Mr. Casey and the President have come up

with what we have been advocating. We are glad that they have seen the

light of day. We are pleased that they understand that the American

people want real leadership and they want an end to this war, they want

the troops home. So while we know that it may be calculated in a

political way to time with the November elections and all that, we

still support it. I do, and the Out of Iraq Caucus will certainly

embrace it because, again, it is our plan.

When Mr. Murtha talked about over the horizon, that is exactly what

he was talking about, the same thing the Casey plan has come up with:

keep some soldiers in the region just in case they are needed in a

crisis.

So thank you, Mr. Casey and Mr. President, for finally embracing the

Democrat plan by Mr. Murtha that calls for redeployment. It has been

misinterpreted, misidentified. Even the press got it wrong, and they

tried to say that the Murtha plan was demanding that our troops get out

immediately. It has never been that.

Now I want to see how the press will interpret the Casey plan, if the

press will understand and report that it is the Murtha plan.

I will say it over and over again. I am pleased and proud that the

President and Mr. Casey at least have come to the point, for whatever

reasons, whatever their motivations are, to embrace something that will

work, the Murtha plan.