Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for calling this

Special Order tonight and for your leadership.

Today marks the fourth anniversary of the invasion and bombing of

Iraq. It is a solemn occasion that reminds me with a very heavy heart

of our brave troops who we want to protect and who we want to bring

home.

As the occupation now enters its 5th year, it is really an

appropriate time to review some of the history. It is also an

appropriate time to recall that the case for this war was false.

All the talk about aluminum tubes and yellowcake, remember that?

Right.

Colin Powell's dramatic presentation to the United Nations? I still

wonder why such a distinguished Secretary of State would do that.

The fact is there was no connection to al Qaeda. There were no

weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and there was no connection

between the horrific events of 9/11 and Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

Some of us opposed the war from the beginning. In fact, if my

amendment to the authorization to use force had been used 4 years ago,

the United Nations inspectors would have had the opportunity to finish

their job and confirm what we believed and some of us knew at that

time, what the world now knows, namely, that Iraq had no weapons of

mass destruction.

It is an appropriate time now to review the disaster that has taken

place in Iraq, so that the administration does not rewrite this tragic

history, and also to put the administration on notice and in check from

starting a preemptive war against Iran, which many see as looming. It's

appropriate tonight to review this history because the administration

who brought us this debacle would now like us to accept an open-ended

commitment to it.

Why is it appropriate for us to remind the country of all of this

tonight? Because the same people, the same administration who brought

us this disaster are now asking us to trust them again. They are saying

that we should give the President another chance. They are saying, in

effect, that our commitment to supporting their failed policies should

be open-ended.

Think about that for a minute. The people in this administration who

have been wrong about every single major decision about this war are

now trying to make it seem unreasonable to suggest that we should not

continue to write blank checks to support this debacle.

Well, it is not unreasonable. That is where the American people are

on this issue. They know better. It is time for this unfortunate

chapter of our history to close. It is time to end the occupation of

Iraq and bring our troops home.

At various points the administration has told us that the mission has

been accomplished, that we were turning the corner, or that the

insurgency was in its last throes. As we now know, those pronouncements

were all false.

The truth is that the administration's conduct of this war has been

nothing short of shameful. We may never know how many of the roadside

bombs that kill our troops every day are made from explosives looted

from weapons depots that were left unguarded because the administration

chose to ignore the advice of our military commanders on how many

troops would be needed. Whatever the number is, it is too many.

It is an appropriate time tonight to review the cost of the

administration's failed policy in Iraq. The human cost of this

occupation has been terrible. More than 3,200 United States servicemen

and women have died, and more than 32,000 have been wounded. That is an

average of 67 deaths and 500 wounded every month, not to mention the

death and injuries of countless Iraqis.

The financial cost is unsustainable. Already we have spent more than

$400 billion on this invasion and occupation. We are averaging more

than $8 billion per month. That is staggering.

The cost of our security has been devastating. The Bush

administration's military and foreign policy doctrine of preemptive

war, like you can start a war based on perceived future threats, this

was supposed to solve the problem posed by the so-called axis of evil.

Four years after putting the doctrine to test in Iraq, the results

are in, and it is a total failure. Iraq posed no imminent threat to our

security, but today the vast majority of our security resources are

bogged down in Iraq. North Korea has obtained nuclear weapons,

something the doctrine was to prevent, and Iran is empowered and

emboldened. The occupation is undermining our efforts to fight

international terrorism.

According to the National Intelligence Estimate of April 2006, and

this is in their words, they said the Iraq conflict has been the cause

celebre for jihadists, breeding a deep resentment of the United States

involvement in the Muslim world and cultivating supporters for the

global jihadist movement. Now, this is what the National Intelligence

Estimate said.

Furthermore, the toll that the occupation is taking on our Armed

Forces is stretching the military beyond the breaking point. The

Washington Post reported today that Army and Marine officials are

referring to a readiness death spiral in which the ever more rapid pace

of war zone rotations has consumed 40 percent of the total gear,

wearied troops, and left no time to train to fight anything other than

insurgents now at hand.

The administration likes to talk about the situation in Iraq in terms

of winning and losing, because it is convenient to portray critics of

their policies as opposed to victory or supportive of defeat. The fact

is you cannot win an occupation, just as there is no way for the United

States to win an Iraqi civil war.

The Bush administration understands this just as they understand that

there are no pretty or clean options for bringing a responsible end to

our policy there. They are content to mouth the words of victory while

they try to run out the clock, playing a cynical game of political

chicken, where whoever acts to bring a responsible end to their failed

policy will be accused of having lost Iraq.

The trouble is, though, that an average of 67 troops die in Iraq each

month, and 500 are wounded, and we can't forget that. As General

Petraeus and the Iraq Study Group both pointed out, there is no

military solution to this civil war and occupation. For me, the cost of

going along with the President's escalation charade and risking our

brave young men and women's lives is way too high. It's time to bring

this war and occupation to an end. It's time for military measures to

be replaced with diplomacy and engagement with Iraq's neighbors. It's

time to take the target off our troops' back and to bring them home.

Thank you, Mr. Hinchey, for this Special Order tonight, and let's

hope the American people raise their voices loudly and clearly with

regard to what is taking place with this war and bring it to an end

very soon.