Let me begin by thanking the gentleman from New York for

this Special Order and bringing to the American people the very

important issue that stands before us. And I would like to commend the

Out of Iraq Caucus, but primarily the three women from California,

Congresswoman Woolsey, Congresswoman Lee, and Congresswoman Waters, who

have kept this particular issue alive, have continued to work with us

to shape a policy or keep the conscience of America focused on this

situation, a situation that we gave preemptive strike authority to the

President of United States, which all of us opposed, when they said

there were weapons of mass destruction; and when none were found, said,

well, it was regime change was the final one.

But today, we mark the fourth anniversary of the occupation in Iraq.

Ironically, it was almost 4 years ago on May 1, 2003, that President

Bush deemed the operation in Iraq as ``mission accomplished,''

affirming an end to the major combat in Iraq. As you may recall, he

flew in a military plane on an aircraft carrier with a big sign and a

brilliant smile on his face, ``Mission Accomplished.''

By that time, approximately 175 Americans had lost their lives in

combat. Too many, but 175. Yet 3,197 lives later, American lives later,

the war continues; 3,197 more from the pronouncement of ``mission

accomplished.'' Included in this number are 50 fatalities from my home

State of New Jersey.

This weekend, thousands of protesters took to the streets to demand

an end to the war in Iraq. As an early and staunch opponent to this

war, I have watched every single prediction made by this

administration. They have boldly said what they predicted, and every

time the prediction was wrong: from the duration of the war, wrong; the

reception we would receive, wrong; the costs, wrong; the number of

casualties, wrong; the existence of weapons of mass destruction, wrong.

This administration has proven itself wrong, wrong, wrong. The

countless number of Americans and Iraqis who have lost their lives is

sad.

The administration should listen to the Baker-Hamilton Commission,

which has offered a stinging assessment of virtually every aspect of

the U.S. venture in Iraq and calls for a reshaping of the American

presence and a new Middle East democracy initiative to prevent the

country from slipping into anarchy.

There is a great sense of sadness among those of us who foresaw over

4 years ago the tragedy that is now unfolding in Iraq. The war that

many assumed would be swift and certain now continues to rage, but I

urge my fellow colleagues to take this day and all of the days forward

to push for a change, beginning with an orderly withdrawal of American

forces from Iraq. This approach will send a message to Iraqis that they

must take more responsibility for their own security and would reduce

the strain on our military forces. For that, we will not need a surge

to the war to continue and continue surge after surge.

I thank you very much for the time.