Mr. Speaker, those who support our occupation of Iraq

often justify it by saying that there will be a terrible humanitarian

crisis if our troops leave. They must have missed the memo about the

humanitarian crisis that already exists in Iraq. And they must be blind

to the humanitarian crisis that goes on every day right here in America

because of the occupation.

Last week, the Rand Corporation issued a shocking report which

measured the crisis at home. The report found that 300,000 troops who

have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from post-traumatic

stress disorder or major depression; that's about 20 percent of all the

troops who have been deployed. The numbers are truly staggering, but

when you add all the family members who are affected, you realize that

we will never be able to calculate the full human toll of the Iraq

invasion.

Mr. Speaker, the study was the first complete analysis of PTSD and

depression problems. It should have been conducted by our government,

our government, which, by the way, has the greatest responsibility for

the care of our veterans, but it wasn't. It was conducted by the Rand

Corporation, a private, nonprofit organization. The codirector of the

report said one of the reasons that RAND did the study was because the

Pentagon didn't, and they wanted to have the numbers. It is outrageous

that our own Department of Defense didn't know how many of our veterans

were suffering from PTSD and from major depression. How did our

government expect to address this health crises if it didn't know the

full extent of it?

This is another example, Mr. Speaker, of the administration failing

our troops. But it's hardly the only example. Over 125,000 veterans of

the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan are on disability for hearing loss

and other hearing problems. One of the chief reasons is the Pentagon's

failure to fully anticipate the problem of road-side bombs. The blasts

from these bombs cause violent changes in air pressure that can rupture

the eardrum and break bones inside the ear.

And most tragically, we are learning that the government may be

trying to cover up the problem of suicide among veterans. In a trial

that opened yesterday, two organizations are suing the Department of

Veterans Affairs for failing to provide adequate care to prevent

suicides among veterans. An e-mail written by the head of the Mental

Health Services for the VA was shown at that very trial. The e-mail

referred to approximately 1,000 veterans under the VA's care who

attempt suicide every month. And the memo said, ``Shhhh! Is this

something we should carefully address ourselves in some order of press

release before someone stumbles on it?'' This is incredible. The

Veterans Administration is trying to figure out whether to hide the

truth from the American people about the extent of the suicide problem

among our veterans. What a disgrace.

Mr. Speaker, we have a solemn duty to care for our veterans, to honor

them for their sacrifice, and the best way to honor those who have been

injured is to make certain that more aren't injured. That means we must

responsibly redeploy our troops out of Iraq. And it means we must get

on with the task of helping the people of Iraq to rebuild their lives

and their country, and healing the wounds of our veterans right here at

home. The administration will not do it. It is up to Congress to do it.

We owe it to our veterans, to the American people, to the Iraqi

people. And Mr. Speaker, we owe it to ourselves.