Mr. Speaker, I come this evening to further announce to

the people of this Nation that we have formed an Out of Iraq Caucus

here in the Congress of the United States of America.

There has been quite a bit of debate this weekend about the

activities that took place here in Congress. There was a lot of

discussion this weekend about the hearing that was held right here in

the basement of the Capitol headed by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr.

Conyers) in conjunction with a group that is now known as

AfterDowningStreet.org. And that hearing helped to give exposure to the

famous, now famous, infamous memorandum that basically some see as a

smoking gun, discussing who knew what, when did they know it, and what

did they plan to do.

In essence, it is easy to conclude reading that memorandum that this

administration, the President of the United States of America and

others, had decided that they were going into Iraq, that they were

going to attack Saddam Hussein long before 9/11. So that hearing took

place, and it was a very interesting one.

It was a very revealing one and over 30 Members of Congress joined in

the basement in this crowded room. And I have had a lot of questions

this weekend about why were we jammed into such a small room, and I had

to answer truthfully and let the people who asked the question know

that the Republicans are in charge. They are able to determine where we

meet, if we can meet, what kind of space we will have. And they have

said to us, they are going to stop allowing us to use any committee

rooms. And so even though it was a very small room, it was all that we

could get. But, of course, those who have the power can choose to use

it responsibly or irresponsibly.

And I would say to the people of this country at this time that we

will be thwarted in our efforts to get the word out, to have this kind

of discussion; but we will persist, we will not give up.

Further, aside from that hearing, we did form the Out of Iraq Caucus.

Over 60 Members have now signed up. And I am being asked by journalists

and TV personalities, what happened? Why are you having this discussion

and this debate that is occurring at this time?

I must answer those questions by saying, first of all, we have

Members of Congress who were elected by their constituents on peace,

justice and equality issue. We have Members of Congress who have long

histories fighting and agitating for peace. Whether you talk about the

Vietnam War or the work that many of us did to end apartheid in South

Africa or the work that we are doing now to try to bring attention to

genocide in Sudan, this is who we are. This is what we do.

Philosophically, we cannot sit here and allow this war to continue

with no

exit strategy, no answers, no reports from the President of the United

States about how they are really going to get the training done, what

does that mean and basically when are we going to bring our troops

home.

So we have joined with the American public. The American public have

been waiting on us. They are against this war. The polls now are

showing us that the American public wants this war to end, and so we

have joined with them to provide some leadership.

Our caucus is made up of an array of Democrats, some who come from

the New Democrats, some from the Blue Dog Democrats, some from the

Progressive Democrats, but we have come together to talk about

coordinating activities, helping to give a platform to this discussion,

to work with the national peace organizations, to bring in people who

have been trying to get to Congress but since we have no hearings that

are going on, they have not been able to connect with anybody. We are

going to connect with them, whether they are veterans against this war

or mothers and fathers and family members who have had their children

and relatives killed in this war. They are now going to have Members to

talk to.

We are going to create this discussion and this debate, and some

people are saying out now. Some people are saying, Mr. President, give

us a strategy. Some people are trying to come up with a date certain.

We have a bipartisan effort that has been put together with a date

certain attached to it. As far as our caucus is concerned, people see

it a little bit differently, whether or not out now, whether or not we

just beg the President to give us a strategy or whether or not we

insist on a date certain. The most important thing is we are all

organized just to get the word out. We want out of Iraq.

This thing will evolve, and as it evolves, we will know what the

right timing is. The President will have an opportunity now, given that

he has seen the polls and he understands what is going on, he can

denounce it or reject it in any way that he wants, but the fact of the

matter is the people of this country want us out. The new caucus that I

am so proud of that we have formed will work to make sure that we have

the debate that we have not had.