Mr. Speaker, the purpose of my coming to the floor this

evening, along with a number of my friends and colleagues on this side

of the aisle, is to mark the fact that tomorrow will be the 4th year

that our military forces instigated by the administration have attacked

Iraq and engaged in what the administration has called a war in that

country. Most people now have come to realize that we are not engaged

in a war in Iraq, but we are engaged now in an occupation, the

consequences of which are proving to be increasingly disastrous.

At 10:15 p.m. on March 19, 2003, in a televised address to the

Nation, President Bush announced the start of what he refers to as

``the war in Iraq.''

The way in which the administration attempted to justify that attack

has been a grave consequence for the United States, both internally and

around the world. The President, of course, and others in his

administration contended that there was a connection between Iraq and

the attack that took place in New York and at the Pentagon on September

11, 2001, that Iraq was somehow involved in that attack, when all of

the evidence and information indicated that that was not the case.

In spite of that, the administration continued to make that

allegation. They then went on to say that it was important that the

United States invade Iraq for the safety of our country and for the

safety of others because Iraq was a country that possessed what they

referred to as ``weapons of mass destruction,'' alleging that there was

substantial amounts of chemical and biological weapons in Iraq.

They then went on to assert that Iraq had a nuclear weapons program,

and the President of the United States in a 2003 State of the Union

Address to a joint session of Congress and to the Nation here in this

House asserted that the British Government had learned that Iraq had

imported enriched uranium from Niger. When he included that sentence in

his State of the Union Address, he was very much aware that the

intelligence agencies in our country had said that there was no proof

that that was the case. In fact, they had examined the documents upon

which those assertions were being made, and they found those documents

which had been stolen from the Nigerian Embassy in Rome were, in fact,

forged.

So what we have here is an unnecessary and unjustified and

consequently illegal attack on another country and a subsequent

disastrous occupation which has gone on now for 4 years, and we will be

beginning the fifth year starting tomorrow.

As a result of this occupation, over 3,200 American servicemen and

women have been killed in Iraq since our invasion over 4 years ago.

Over 24,000 troops have been wounded in action in Iraq, and the number

of Iraqis killed is unknown, but the estimates range as high as 200,000

Iraqi civilians, mostly women and children, who have been killed in

that country as a result of the military action.

We are spending now about $275 million per day in Iraq. More than $8

billion every month is being spent in that country. And as the Speaker

of the House noted earlier this evening in her speech on the floor, at

least $10 billion of that money is completely unaccounted for, and much

of the rest has been spent in ways that have not been productive, but

have been extraordinarily wasteful.

The President in January called for what he referred to as a surge of

nearly 30,000 additional soldiers into Iraq. So far that has amounted

to 21,500 additional troops that have gone to Iraq in January, and

4,400 more just two weekends ago.

The circumstances there continue to deteriorate as a result of the

corrupt and incompetent way in which this illegal invasion and

subsequent occupation have been carried out by this administration.

Roughly half of all of the ground equipment that the U.S. Army owns

is now located in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since the invasion, the Army

has lost nearly 2,000 wheeled vehicles and more than 1,000 armed

vehicles. To make matters worse, according to the GAO, the Army has not

been keeping accurate track of what they have and what they need to

reset the force, and they cannot provide sufficient detail for Congress

to provide effective oversight.

Between 75,000 and 100,000 pieces of National Guard equipment worth

nearly $2 billion are now located in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is

equipment that is needed by the National Guard here in our country to

carry out the obligations and responsibilities of the National Guard

around the United States. And they are now increasingly being deprived

of their ability to carry out their responsibilities and obligations

because of the loss of their equipment.

The Regular Army has lost so much equipment which has not been

replaced that they are now using the equipment of the National Guard to

replace the equipment that they have lost and which this administration

has failed to provide replacements for.

We have a situation that is confronting us now in Iraq which is

increasingly damaging, dangerous, and on the verge of being disastrous

for our country as well as for others in the Middle East.

We need this Congress to assert its obligations and responsibilities

to oversee the activities of this administration, and that is clearly

necessary because all through the 4 years during which this illegal

invasion took place followed by this occupation, there has not been any

significant oversight by this Congress, which, of course, was

controlled by the Republican majority for all of that period of time.

Now that we have a Democratic majority in Congress, that oversight is

beginning. Appropriate hearings are being conducted both in this House

and in the Senate, and more and more information concerning the way in

which this operation has been carried out is being made available to

the American people, and as a result of that, more and more people

across the country are realizing what a disaster this has been. More

and more Americans are understanding how they were intentionally and

purposefully misled and deceived by this administration in order to

carry out this invasion which had absolutely nothing to do with the

attack of September 11, and which cannot be justified in any way

whatsoever.

This action is unlawful, and appropriate oversight and supervision

based upon detailed and focused hearings by this Congress is now

absolutely necessary.

We have with us this evening several of my colleagues who are

interested in speaking about this issue, and I would now like to

recognize my very good friend from Ohio, who will address the House at

this time.

Thank you very much. I very much appreciate the

statement that was just made by our colleague from Ohio, Marcy Kaptur,

the respect that she has given to our military, appropriately so, and

her examination of the consequences that we

are confronting now in Iraq as a result of the incompetent way in which

this administration has dealt with the political and economic

circumstances there in that country.

I would like now to yield time to my friend and colleague from New

York, John Hall.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend John Hall

from New York for his strong presentation and for joining us this

evening in this discussion about this critical issue.

I would now like to recognize my friend and colleague from

California, Barbara Lee.

I thank you for your very articulate expression of all

of those facts, your leadership here and for joining us this evening.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to recognize my friend from California

(Ms. Woolsey).

I thank you, Lynn Woolsey, for your leadership and the

way you have directed your attention to this issue over and over again

on the floor of this House so many times, and done it so well.

Mr. Speaker, now I would like to yield time to my dear friend and

colleague from California (Ms. Waters).

Ms. Waters, I thank you very much for your dynamic

leadership and for joining us this evening and for those remarks.

I yield to my good friend and colleague from New Jersey (Mr. Payne).

I thank my friend Donald Payne from New Jersey for his

leadership and for joining us this evening.

Mr. Speaker, the point that we have made here tonight is that perhaps

at no time in the history of this country, except for perhaps our own

Civil War, have we faced the kind of circumstances that we are

presently being confronted with as a result of the way in which this

administration incompetently and corruptly has led us into this illegal

occupation in Iraq.

We need to correct these circumstances. It is the responsibility of

this Congress to do so. We need to hold this administration

accountable. It is the responsibility of this Congress to do so. We

need to remove our military forces from Iraq in an appropriate and

timely way. And it is the responsibility of this Congress to take that

kind of leadership.

I thank my friends and colleagues for joining us here on this very

important 4-year anniversary of the illegal attack and subsequent

occupation of Iraq. We need now to change these circumstances.