First of all, I would like to thank the gentleman from

New York for this Special Order and for including me and allowing me to

speak once again on this House floor about this war and this occupation

of Iraq.

On the evening of March 19, 2003, speaking from the Oval Office, the

President of the United States started his address to the Nation with

these very words, and I quote him.

``My fellow citizens, at this hour, American and coalition forces are

in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its

people and to defend the world from grave danger.'' Here we are, 4

years later, and it's fair to ask, indeed, it's incumbent upon us to

ask, have we disarmed Iraq?

Well, first off, as we all know, there are no weapons of mass

destruction to disarm, so that whole entire premise was flawed.

The question we have to ask is have we made Iraq safer? We may have

deposed Saddam Hussein, but with insurgents, militias and vigilantes

terrorizing Iraqi neighborhoods, some of them with the tacit support of

the Iraqi Government, it's impossible to say we have disarmed Iraq or

made its people and communities more secure.

Have we freed Iraq's people? Well, I can think of at least 60,000

Iraqis for starters who haven't been freed. That's the most

conservative estimate of Iraqi civilian deaths over the last 4 years,

at least 60,000 killed for the cause of their so-called liberation.

Many of those who have escaped death live in fear of it, afraid to go

to the market or send their children to school, if there is still a

school for them to attend. Too many Iraqis live in communities without

electricity, without sewage or basic services. Have we freed them?

What about those who are so flush with freedom that they have chosen

to flee their own country? I am talking about the 1.5 million-plus

Iraqi refugees. Why don't we ask them if they feel free?

Have we defended the world from grave danger? Indeed not. One study

by the Center for Security Studies at New York University Law School

concludes that the rate of fatal Muslim terror attacks worldwide has

increased by a factor of seven since the Iraq war began. I repeat, that

is seven times as much terrorism since we started this occupation, more

people call it a war, but it is really an occupation, because this

occupation that they keep telling us is the central front in the war on

terror is not getting rid of terror.

It's clear our Iraq policy has had a major impact in the war on

terrorism. Unfortunately, it appears to be helping the wrong side.

So to go back to the President's statement of exactly 4 years ago, it

would appear he has accomplished none of these three tasks, tasks he

claimed to have begun that night 4 years ago. Iraq is not disarmed, its

people are not free, and the world is more dangerous. It was never

supposed to get to this point. You remember this was going to be quick,

it was going to be painless. We are going to finish these guys off

without breaking a sweat, remember.

On the very same day that President Bush spoke in front of the

Mission Accomplished banner, prominent neoconservative Richard Perle

actually published an op ed in a major national newspaper entitled

``Relax, Celebrate Victory.'' The cost? Don't worry, they told us, Iraq

oil revenues will cover the entire thing.

They fired the top White House economic adviser for daring to suggest

that the war had cost as much as $200 billion. What would they have

done to him if they had known he was underestimating it by a few

hundred billion dollars?

We have to ask our colleagues who authorized the President to launch

the preemptive strike on Iraq, is this what you voted for, to invade a

country that had no weapons of mass destruction, no link to 9/11; to

occupy that country for 4 years, helping foster a vicious insurgency

and fan the flames of civil war?

If you had known these things, and if you had known that it would

cost us over 3,200 lives to date, and upwards of $400 billion,

uncounted civilian deaths, and between 35,000, as the Pentagon tells

us, or over 200,000, as reported by the Veterans Administration,

wounded, we have to ask, can you look the American people in the eye

and say you would have done the same thing all over again knowing what

you know now?

If your answer is no, if you believe the war has been a mistake, then

it makes absolutely no sense to let it continue any longer, and it

makes even less sense to hand the President an additional $100 billion

with which to pursue the same disastrous policy.

Our troops have done their job. They and their families have

sacrificed more than enough. They have been forced to dig for scrap

metal in order to armor their vehicles. They have endured substandard

care, bureaucratic delays and squalid conditions at Walter Reed

Hospital. They have been betrayed by the grievous mistakes of their

civilian supervisors and superiors.

Support our troops. Bring them home.

I have four grandchildren who weren't born 4 years ago. They have

never lived in a world unclouded by this shameful, destructive and

unnecessary occupation. I fear that if this Congress doesn't act, they

will be living with these consequences well into their adult lives. It

is for them, for the America they will inherit, that I want this war to

end.

It's time to act boldly. Americans are crying out for leadership, for

their elected representatives to hear their frustrations about Iraq and

to move decisively in response.

This is a gut-check moment. Do you want it said about the 110th

Congress that it failed the test of history, that it continued to send

young Americans to kill and be killed on a mission that did nothing to

enhance our national security or promote U.S. foreign interests? Do you

want it said that we made a tragic mistake; even worse, that we blindly

rubber-stamped a failed policy that has ignited a civil war and

inspired a new generation of terrorists?

The Iraq policy of the last 4 years has proven ruinous and misguided

at every turn by any objective measure. As a matter of humanitarian

obligation and political accountability, it's time to change course.

In the name of national security, fiscal responsibility and basic

human decency, we must get our troops out of Iraq and bring them home

by the end of this year. Bring them home for the holidays.

I thank you again, Mr. Hinchey.