

predatory lending. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce promotes these terrifying practices, driving working families to fear for their financial future.

All Americans are terrorized by more than 30,000 handgun deaths each year. This trauma is condoned and promoted by the National Rifle Association, a bipartisan terrorist organization.

Our brave servicemen and women in uniform are terrorized by the Iraqi insurgency and civil war. Though 2,500 American soldiers and countless Iraqi citizens have died, the right wing noise machine encourages additional deaths by coloring as pro-terrorist those of us who dare to acknowledge the futility of the President's War in Iraq.

Terrorism is a very real threat, but it comes in many forms other than those found in Iraq and, as I've outlined here today, we are doing precious little to combat it in America.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this resolution and to join me in a call to redirect our attention, our federal dollars, and our lives to our needs here at home.

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, we are on the floor today debating a most serious issue. However, rather than truly addressing solutions, the resolution before us is filled with platitudes which seek to vindicate the ill advised policies of the President's war on Iraq. Rather than allowing a meaningful and constructive debate on Iraq, the Republican Leadership decided not to allow any amendments to their resolution. It is a travesty that the elected representatives of the American people are prevented today from offering policy alternatives that might actually affect the shape of U.S. policy in Iraq.

This debate had the potential to mark a turning point to the current vacuum of congressional oversight over the Bush Administration as it pursues its misguided and incompetently planned war in Iraq. Rather than offering real solutions, the Republican Majority in Congress has decided to rubber stamp the President's campaign in Iraq.

The American people know what has happened, and demand more than just a rubber stamp from their representatives in Congress. Just as in the case of Vietnam, they see a White House which misled our country into war. Using shoddy evidence and insinuations about the connections between Iraq and al Qaeda, the Bush Administration took our country to war to face the "imminent threat" of an Iraq with nuclear weapons.

Despite claims by the Republicans and the Bush Administration, there was no significant relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda. Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction, a fact which Hans Blix, the head of the UN weapons inspection team, recently stated would have become clear had President Bush not ignored our allies' requests that we give the inspectors a few more months before invading. After its claims about the weapons of mass destruction were proven to be incorrect, the Administration has continually shifted its rationale for the invasion.

As though it were not bad enough that we went into a war in an incompetent and deceptive manner, it is unforgivable that our troops were sent into this war without adequate planning and equipment. Our troops are out there putting their lives on the line, yet the President decided to follow the advice of misguided ideologues in overruling the plans developed

by experts before the war. One former commander of U.S. Central command, General Anthony Zinni, said that "ten years worth of planning were thrown away; troop levels dismissed out of hand . . . these were not tactical mistakes, these were strategic mistakes, mistakes of policy made back here."

There are better ways to support our troops than to send more of them to their death in a poorly planned war. It's time to shift our approach from the ineffectual policies of a President who only listens to advisors with pre-determined hawkish mindsets. As a member of the Out of Iraq Caucus, I stand with my colleagues in urging Congress to urgently re-evaluate the failed policies of the President. Representative JACK MURTHA has drafted a resolution that encourages the Iraqi people to take charge of their own security and lays the groundwork for bringing our troops home.

These are the sort of options we should be debating today if we truly want to demonstrate our support for our troops. Instead, the Republican Leadership has put forth this political ploy. Congress should fulfill their Constitutional responsibility to exercise oversight instead of continuing to place blind faith in the President as he pursues the war in Iraq.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I do not support this shameful attempt to provide an illusion of oversight.

Mr. MARCHANT. Mr. Speaker, America and its allies are engaged in a war against a terrorist movement that spans all corners of the globe. It is sparked by radical ideologues that breed hatred, oppression, and violence against all of their declared enemies. Since September 11, 2001, the powerful coalition of nations, led by the United States, has seen many successes against al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. It is imperative that we remain united and steadfast in the quest to defeat terrorism around the world.

Last year I traveled to the Middle East to visit with troops in Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan. I came away with several observations:

First, morale of the troops is HIGH. They are confident of the progress they have made in the mission to spread freedom and democracy in the Middle East. Not ONE serviceman or woman I encountered had any doubts about the purpose and importance of his or her presence there. The troops are positive and appreciative of all of the support they received from back home.

Their confidence in their mission is well-justified. Since my visit, the Iraqis have ratified a new constitution and installed a new, strong Prime Minister, Nuri Al-Maliki. And now the latest milestone: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al Qaeda's leader in Iraq, was killed in an air raid last week.

Mr. Speaker, as I sat in a tent in Kuwait eating dinner with troops from Texas, I was struck by how young most of them were. Those soldiers with me were 18–20 years old. Their experiences and their stories humbled me. Never in my life have I felt such emotion and love for our service men and women than when I sat and looked at these brave young soldiers. Barely out of high school, yet each day these heroes awaken knowing of the perils that lie ahead. Danger awaits them, but they continue to make a great sacrifice each day so that you and I can be free.

I sometimes feel that we Americans take our freedoms and our lives for granted. We forget the images of 9/11. Yet while on my trip

to the Middle East, the London bombings occurred. This was yet another stark reminder that if we don't fight terrorists abroad, they just get closer to our home.

Mr. Speaker, the War on Terror is a global effort; it reaches beyond a small concentration of countries in the Middle East. I'd like to share the story of Marine Staff Sergeant Nathan Fletcher. Sergeant Fletcher's wife, Mindy, lived in Dallas and also worked for another war hero, my fellow Texas Congressman SAM JOHNSON, on Capitol Hill. He is currently experiencing his third extended separation from Mindy since they married a few years ago and the start of the war on terrorism.

Sergeant Fletcher is serving in a very remote region in the Horn of Africa. He is part of a Combined Joint Task Force focused on defeating transnational terrorist groups operating in the region. Sergeant Fletcher and his fellow troops in Africa lack amenities like running water, reliable power, and air conditioning. There is no internet, television, or even paved roads. Because they are so far away from the main camp they eat off the local economy. There are no fruits or vegetables where he is based, and so far he has eaten camel, goat, lamb, beef, and a couple things he could not identify. They cook their meals over an open fire and sleep outside every night.

Sergeant Fletcher's wife writes, "His team is doing well and I know they are working very long hours. I can't imagine going 40 days without running water in temperatures over 100 degrees without air conditioning, but I know Nathan and other servicemen and women do it every day." She continues, "Iraq and Afghanistan get most of the focus, but our troops are fighting the global war on terror throughout the world. I am really proud that he is part of making sure al-Qaeda and other terrorists aren't able to expand into another part of the world."

Mr. Speaker, Sergeant Fletcher and the millions of other troops fighting the War on Terror around the world believe in what they're doing. They don't want to stop. They know their mission is right. We owe it to them to see this campaign for democracy through until we are completely victorious.

Mindy no doubt wishes that Nathan was at home with her. Nathan no doubt wishes he was at home sitting in the air conditioning and eating a t-bone steak rather than camel steak. Yet they both know the reasons and the importance of the mission.

Mr. Speaker, Sergeant Fletcher is enduring these harsh conditions for our freedom. Make no mistake—this mission is not only justified, it is essential. Let us never forget the Pearl Harbors, the attacks of 9/11. Let us never forget the freedom we have. Let us never forget the Sergeant Fletchers and the sacrifices they make for us.

Mr. Speaker, we must not lay down our arms now. We must press on, for freedom, for peace.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I salute Congressman MURTHA and I salute the servicemen and women in the field, at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and those waiting to serve.

I rise today to oppose the resolution before us today because it does nothing to ensure a more stable and secure Iraq nor does it do anything to bring our troops home from Iraq.

My constituents have asked me when Congress will get serious and have an open discussion about our future plans and policies in

Iraq. Today, we begin to answer their calls. But we cannot stop today. We should debate the war in Iraq everyday on the House floor.

Yet rather than seriously and substantially debating the issues at hand, the Majority has presented self-congratulatory resolutions that intentionally seek to divide the House. Today is no exception.

Earlier today, I meet with a group of 7th and 8th graders from my Central New Jersey district. I asked them what I should say to put the Iraq War in perspective. The students offered a number of observations. One said that too many lives have been lost already. Another said that the reasons for going to war were wrong, maybe even deceptive. A third said that the Iraqi people are worse-off today.

They are right. The longer U.S. troops remain in Iraq the worse the conditions on the ground get for the Iraqi people.

I spoke with Senator BYRD (D-WV) the other day, who was here for the deceptive Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. He says that is one vote he would like to take back. I am not saying that Iraq is another Vietnam, because the two are different. But we should ask ourselves how will posterity regard Congress for giving President Bush everything he asked for without any oversight or accountability.

The shifting rationales for the war in Iraq have led to the lack of a clear understanding of why we are there, or how we achieve victory. Our mission cannot be accomplished because there is no clear mission. There have been a number of rotating rationales offered for the war. One was Weapons of Mass Destruction and the threat of a terrorist attack on one of our cities. Then it was Saddam's human rights abuses. Another was the argument that the United Nation's disarmament and containment efforts were not working and that UN resolutions were being violated. Then it was to stand up a democracy to be emulated across the Middle East. Another was to protect America's strategic oil interest in the region. And as we have heard over and over today, it was to fight terrorism and a response to the terrible attacks on September 11th.

No it is not about Khobar Towers, or the USS *Cole* or even the terrible attacks on the World Trade Center. Today's debate is about Iraq, and this is a resolution that says "stay the course."

This is all classic misdirection. We need to remember that there were no terrorists in Iraq involved in the September 11th attacks. In fact, there were no terrorists threatening us from Iraq before we invaded. The War in Iraq is not about terrorism, except to the extent that Iraq has become a haven and a training ground for terrorists.

We must also recognize that our country was propelled into the conflict under false pretenses. That has implications not only for how we got into Iraq, but for why we need to get out, and how we should view future claims of threats to America based on questionable intelligence and even more questionable assumptions.

The war in Iraq has warped American priorities, and cost us dearly in terms of lives, money, and lost opportunities for progress at home and abroad. It has hurt our international standing and our ability to counter terrorism abroad. Numerous powder kegs around the world, have been ignored. Here at home, Hurricane Katrina crystallized for the American people the fact that the President and this

Congress were willing to place our attention and resources in Iraq, at great cost to our ability to help our own citizens here at home. This includes the short-changing of homeland security measures for our ports, railroads, and chemical plants. Repeatedly, Democrats have tried to get the Congress to invest in these areas, and repeatedly we've been told there is not enough money. And yet, we pay for the war in Iraq—to the tune of \$11 million per hour.

History will remember this war in Iraq as a colossal blunder. When we leave Iraq—as I hope we will, starting immediately—no one will wish that we'd stayed a little longer. No one will look back and think the current course could have ever been successful.

To their credit, our troops have done everything we have asked them. They are heroes. But we have placed them in the middle of a budding civil war. The President's failed strategy has made their jobs impossible, and his refusal to change course has continued to make them targets on the ground.

It is time for a more sensible course of action in Iraq. Only a negotiated settlement with broad international help will prevent civil war between the Sunnis and Shiites. We need to ensure that we work together with the community of nations and the United Nations to have any hope for peace, security, and prosperity in Iraq. We have tried to do this almost single handedly for too long and it is time to work with the international community to reconstruct Iraq.

I have said for almost a year now that the United States must redeploy our troops from Iraq. I am a cosponsor of Congressman Murtha's legislation, H.J. Res. 73, which would redeploy the current forces in Iraq at the earliest practicable date. That is because the presence of our troops, who are serving valiantly and ably, is improving neither our security nor that of the Iraqis. In fact, our presence itself is unifying Saddam Hussein loyalists, al Qaeda sympathizers, and many civilians against us. Our presence is fueling the insurgency.

Redeploying our forces does not mean walking away from Iraq. Iraq's security forces and government will need our continued moral, political, intelligence and in some cases, financial support. But the hard work of securing the country and building a new society is one that only the Iraqis can do. Reducing and refining our military and political presence in Iraq is the necessary first step in that process.

If we are to defend America and our allies from the global jihadist threat, our continued presence in Iraq defeats that purpose. It has been and remains a deadly and unnecessary misadventure that has compromised our ability to advance our interests around the world and at home to defeat the larger threat we face. To get back on course in the global war against al Qaeda, we must change course in Iraq, and now.

This war is simply not making us or the Iraqi people safer. The generals understand that. A majority of Iraqis understand that. The majority of the American people understand that. Seventh graders from New Jersey understand it, as well. Let's begin our redeployment immediately so that we can refocus our efforts where they belong: on rallying the world to the cause of defeating Osama bin Laden and those who follow him.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this Resolution.

The Resolution before this House today engages in a rhetorical fiction. The Republican Leadership has grafted into this Resolution language which confuses the War in Iraq with the War Against Terror. Iraq did not have anything to do with the September 11th attacks. We did not invade Iraq because of 9–11. We invaded Iraq because the Bush Administration convinced Congress and the American people that Saddam Hussein had acquired nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and might use them.

The terrorism now taking place in Iraq is the direct result of the war, not its cause. To suggest otherwise is to ignore the facts.

The fact is, this war was a very bad mistake. The Administration launched an invasion into Iraq in March of 2003 even though the Administration knew from the reports it was getting back from the IAEA and the UN inspectors that there where no nuclear or other WMDs at the sites identified by the CIA, by British Intelligence, and by other sources.

Now we are bogged down in a quagmire with no end in sight.

In February of this year, the President was asked when we could expect all American troops to be out of Iraq, and he replied that this was a decision for a future President and a future Iraqi government to make. In other words, if we continue to pursue the Bush Administration's policies, we will likely have troops deployed in Iraq until at least January of 2009—that's nearly three years from now!

What has been the cost of this war in terms of blood?

2,500 U.S. troops killed.

More than 18,400 American troops wounded.

An estimated 38,000 Iraqi civilians killed.

What has been the cost of this war in terms of treasure?

Nearly \$320 billion so far . . .

Just think of all the good we could have done in this world or in this country if we had devoted \$320 billion for health care, for education, for fighting poverty or creating jobs.

What has been the cost in terms of America's influence around the world?

It has been severely compromised.

We "cried wolf" over non-existent Iraqi WMDs, over alleged connections between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda;

We failed to deploy enough troops to suppress the insurgency;

We put inadequately trained troops in charge of Abu Ghraib prison;

It's time to pursue a new direction.

The Iraqis are standing up, but we are standing still, staying the course. It is time to redeploy an increasing percentage of our forces to an over-the-horizon presence, as the gentleman from Pennsylvania (MR. MURTHA) has suggested in the legislation he introduced last year.

We should not be planning on maintaining any military bases in Iraq or any long-term troop presence in that country.

It is time for us to bring this war to an end, and to bring our troops home.

Vote NO on this resolution because it is as much a fraud as the reasons the Bush Administration gave for invading Iraq in the first place.

I urge defeat of the Resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 868, further proceedings on the resolution will be postponed.