

There was no objection.

FUTURE INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KAGEN) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. KAGEN. Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to begin a bipartisan conversation about the future investments of our resources in both human and capital resources in the region of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Everyone will agree that we must do whatever it takes to protect America and keep hostilities from our shores. And over time, I believe we'll also come to understand that religious fundamentalism is civilization's real enemy, no matter if it is disguised in Muslim, Judeo-Christian, Hindu, Sikh or any other religious clothing.

Terrorism is not really the enemy, for violent extremists simply use terrorism as a tactic. Overcoming the violent extremists will require skilled and talented police work as coordinated between civilized nations, not only our mutual military might. And we must hunt, capture and prosecute the violent extremists wherever they seek to establish themselves, sharing the expense and doing so with our colleagues in our mutual nations overseas, our friends, particularly in NATO. Most importantly, throughout this process, we must continue to defend ourselves within the laws as established by our United States Constitution. We're still paying for the poor judgments of the previous administration which, in 2003, placed our children in the middle of a centuries' old religious civil war in Iraq, when, in fact, our invasion of Iraq was not necessary. By continuing to spend millions of our hard-earned tax dollars over there, we are unable to solve our own problems here at home.

The truth about Iraq is this: no weapons of mass destruction were present in Iraq, and al Qaeda extremists were not based there before President Bush convinced Congress to go to war. And remember this: Iraq was not involved in the attacks against America, and did not pose a risk to our national security, and it was not a danger to our national security at all.

We all have the same goal, to support our troops before, during and after they've served in harm's way, as we begin to build a better and safer and more secure Nation for all of us. Recent testimony before Congress, before the Armed Services Committee in the last several weeks, by our military leaders has made it clear: first, that they all don't agree on what we should be doing in the region, and secondly, that there is no purely military solution in either Iraq or Afghanistan, only a political one. We must, therefore, move our troops away from Iraq, focusing again upon al Qaeda.

Tonight, here on the House floor we will be discussing our ongoing involve-

ment in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which for centuries has been the graveyard of invading empires, a place where our Nation's most precious resources, our soldiers, are presently engaged in efforts to, as President Obama has stated, "disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan and to prevent their return to Pakistan and Afghanistan."

I'm very grateful that President Obama has taken time to listen, taken time as well and trust that he will design a strategy that has as its first goal the safe return of all of our troops as soon as possible, for there is really no purely military solution to the complex global problems that we're all facing. And as history has proven time and time again, making war is our worst human failure.

So what are some of the numbers in Afghanistan? Suicides, post-traumatic stress disorder, a wound that we cannot see, but which our soldiers carry with them all their lives, a wound that damages not just themselves but their families and their businesses when they come home, amputations, burns, shrapnel wounds, fractured spines.

Thirty percent of our returning servicemen have PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder. Seventy thousand of our soldiers have traumatic brain injury since 2007. In January of this year through October of this year, 1,800 have been wounded in Afghanistan, 1,000 being wounded in the last 3 months alone. And for the cause? The cause of helping, in part, to support the very fraudulent government, a government that has been formed by an election process not witnessed in our country, no matter what election you take a look at.

I will quote now from an article:

"You can't build a new political system with old politician accused of war crimes," said lawmaker, Ramazan Bashardost, who finished third in the country's fraud-marred August election. "You can't have peace with warlords in control."

Rights groups have accused soldiers and police loyal to the warlords of kidnapping, extortion, robbery and the rape of women, girls and boys. In the countryside, local commanders run their own fiefdoms with illegal militias. They intimidate people into paying them taxes, extracting bribes, steal their land, and trade drugs. They essentially rule with impunity, and no government official, no judge, no policeman can stand up to them. This is the Afghanistan world as we know it. This is the Afghanistan situation as President Karzai may soon be sworn in and give his speech in several hours in Kabul.

Earlier today, there was a newspaper report that is entitled Afghan Official Said to Take Bribe for Copper Deal. This is how business is being done in Afghanistan. \$20 million bribe to a minister who gave a contract to a Chinese corporation who was coming in to mine their copper. Fraud and bribery

are the rule of the day today in Afghanistan, where nearly 40 percent of the money that our taxpayers are sending into the region is taken down in bribes and plain thievery.

Well, some of the testimony that has been offered by the Armed Services Committee was put forward by people that we know and people we trust.

□ 1845

Wesley Clark finished his testimony with these words: "But it is important to face the reality of the situation at this point: much has already been accomplished: our obligations are limited; there will never be a complete and wholly satisfactory solution, and we must focus on meeting our own—the United States' and NATO's—security needs. And the real security need in the region now is to reduce the continuing threat of al Qaeda, reportedly located principally in Pakistan. It is their decisive defeat that we must seek." These are the counsel and opinion of the former NATO commander, Wesley Clark.

There is somebody else that testified, Kimberly Kagan. And she spells it with an A-N, so we are not related by marriage or by genealogy. Perhaps the most interesting sentence in her publication, which is entitled—I want you to read it some day—"Why the Taliban Are Winning for Now," Kimberly Kagan, Foreign Policy Magazine, August 10, 2009, was "The fact that we have not been doing the right things for the past few years in Afghanistan is actually good news at this moment." I don't know if that is "Saturday Night Live" material, but I've got to tell you, this is not something we should be sending our troops in to when we are doing the wrong thing.

Andrew Krepinevich wrote: "Simply stated, the military foundation of our global dominance is eroding." That's his opinion. It's also a fact. The empire of the United States, the global reach, may be coming to an end.

And the final quote I will offer as we begin our discussions comes from Gilles Dorronsoro, who is a visiting scholar with South Asia Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. And he concludes his remarks before the Armed Services Committee with this sentence: "The only solution to this problem is a political negotiation and the awareness of what is really at stake here: the credibility of NATO as a military alliance."

These are some of the problems that we face today, but this is not a new problem. For 2,300 years ago, 1 day after the Battle of Kalinga, in 265 B.C., where over 100,000 people perished in the lands our Nation has sent its own children, trained in war, the then-King of Maurya dynasty, Ashoka, recorded his thoughts for our Nation's guidance today.

And Ashoka wrote: "What have I done? Is this a victory? What is a defeat then? This is a victory or a defeat. This is justice or injustice. It's gallantry or a rout. Is it a valor to kill innocent children and women? I do it to

enwiden the empire or for prosperity or to destroy the other's kingdom or splendor? Someone has lost her husband, someone a father, someone a child, someone an unborn infant. What is this debris of corpses? Are these marks of victory or defeat? Are these vultures, crows, eagles, the messengers of death or evil? What have I done? What have I done?"

After he conquered the region of Afghanistan, he transformed his own personal philosophies and his kingdoms to promote peace, to promote Buddhism and a nonviolent way of solving problems.

I believe there is a better way of doing things in America; and I am convinced that by working together, we are going to be able to find it and to do that in a very bipartisan way.

I yield to my friend, my colleague, a physician and Congressman, RON PAUL of Texas.

Mr. PAUL. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I want to express my appreciation for your getting this Special Order on this very important subject.

Of course, a lot of people in this country are asking, What should we do about Afghanistan? It's a pretty important question. It might be one of the most important questions that we are asking right now. And yet nobody seems to have an answer. I think the difficulty in finding an answer comes sometimes from not having fully understood why we got there. I just can't imagine this debate that's going on within our government today, the executive branch, the legislative branch, and with the people—can you imagine this going on during World War II? How many troops should we have? What is our exit strategy? Who is our enemy? How are we going to impose democracy? It's so far removed from what a traditional responsibility is of our government, which is to provide national security.

Now they have practically run out of excuses for why we are over in Afghanistan. The only one that is left that they seem to cling to is that we are there for national security; we want to fight the bad guys over there because we don't want to fight them over here. I will talk a little about that later; but, quite frankly, I think that's a fallacious argument and actually makes things a lot worse.

It just bewilders me about how we get trapped into these situations. I happen to believe that it's because we get ourselves involved too carelessly, too easily and we don't follow the Constitution, because under the Constitution, you're supposed to declare the war, know who your enemy is, and know when you can declare victory and bring the troops home. And we did that up until and through World War II. But since then, that hasn't been the case.

I recall a book I read in the 1980s written by Barbara Tuchman. She wrote a book called the "March of Folly," and she went back as far as Troy, all the way up through Vietnam

and took very special interest in countries where they were almost obsessed or possessed with a policy, even though it was not in their interest, and the foolishness and the inability to change course. She died in 1989, but I keep thinking that if she had lived, she would probably write a history of our recent years, another "march of folly."

Just think of what has happened since the Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet system collapsed. It didn't take us long. Did we have any peace dividends? No. There were arguments for more military spending, we had more responsibility, we had to go and police the world. So it wasn't long after that, what were we doing? We were involved in the Persian Gulf war.

And then, following that, we had decades of bombing in Iraq which didn't please the Arabs and the Muslims of the world and certainly the Iraqis, but it had nothing to do with national security.

And then, of course, we continued and accelerated our support of the various puppet governments in the Middle East. In doing so, we actually went to the part of not only supporting the governments, but we started putting troops on their land. And when we had an air base in Saudi Arabia, that was rather offensive. If you understand the people over there, this is a violation of a deeply held religious view. It is considered their holy land; and foreigners, especially military foreigners, are seen as infidels. So if you're looking for a fight or a problem, just put troops on their land.

But also, as a result of the policy that we have had in the Middle East, we have been perceived as being anti-Palestinian. This has not set well either. Since that time, of course, we haven't backed off one bit. We had the Persian Gulf war, and then we had 9/11.

We know that 9/11 changed everything. We had 15 individuals from Saudi Arabia, a few from Yemen and a few from Egypt, but, aha, this is an excuse that we have got to get the bad guys. So where are the bad guys? Well, Iraq, of course. Of course, they figured, well, we can't quite do that, let's go into Afghanistan. Of course, not one single Afghani did anything to us. They said, oh, no, the al Qaeda visited there.

But I just can't quite accept the fact that the individuals that were flying those airplanes got their training by going to these training camps in Afghanistan doing push-ups and being tough and strong. What did they do? Where was the planning? The planning was done in Spain and they were accepted there in legal bases. They were done in Germany; they were accepted there. As a matter of fact, they even came to this country with legal visas. And they were accepted by the countries.

And, no, no, we said, it's the Taliban; it's the people of Afghanistan, never questioning the fact that a few years back, back in 1989 when the Soviets

were wrecking the place, we were allied with the people who were friends of Osama bin Laden, and we were over there trying to support him. So he then was a freedom fighter.

And the hypocrisy of all this and the schizophrenia of it all, they were on again and off again. No wonder we get ourselves into these difficulties. And it doesn't seem to ever lead up.

The one assessment that was made after Vietnam, and I think you can apply it here, is how do we get in and why do we get bogged down? And two individuals that were talking about this, East and West, Vietnam and the United States, they sort of came to the conclusion that we, the Americans, overestimated the ominous power of our military, we could conquer anybody and everybody. And we underestimated the tenacity of people who are defending their homeland, sort of like we were defending our homeland in the Revolutionary War, and the invaders and the occupiers were the Red Coats. There's a big difference, and you can overcome all kinds of obstacles; but we have never seemed to have learned that. And unless we do, I don't think we can solve our problems.

Indeed, we have to realize that we are not the policemen of the world. We cannot nation-build. And Presidential candidates on both sides generally tell the people that's what they want, and the people say, keep our fingers crossed, hope it's true. But then, once again, our policies continue down the road, and we never seem to have the energy to back off of this.

I emphasize, once again, that I think we could keep our eye on the target, emphasize what we should be doing if we went to war a lot more cautiously, if we have an enemy that we have to fight in our national defense and then there is a declaration of war.

Mr. KAGEN. Would the gentleman yield for a moment?

Mr. PAUL. I will yield.

Mr. KAGEN. In the beginning in the formation of the United States, we had an outside observer come over here, Alexis de Tocqueville. And de Tocqueville observed that with our Republic, it would be very difficult to get this country, this Nation, to go to war. But once involved in a war, it would be very difficult to stop it. And I think that MO, that picture, that frame is in part what is happening here. Now that we are involved in a ground game in other areas of the world, it's very difficult for our Republic to pull back.

I would like now to welcome to the floor Congressman MCGOVERN from the State of Massachusetts. And I thank you for joining us on this discussion on Afghanistan and Pakistan and where do we go from here.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Thank you very much, and I want to thank you and my other colleagues here for taking the time to come to the floor to talk about this issue. We are at war, and there is very little debate about this war. I think it is important and it is incumbent upon every Member of this House

to encourage the fullest possible debate on our policy in Afghanistan.

We are told that the President any day now or any week is going to come up with a new policy. There are rumors that it will include an increase in the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

That needs to be debated.

Part of our job is to be a check and balance on the executive branch. And it is our constituents who are going to war. It is our constituents who are dying over there. It is our constituents who are getting wounded over there and coming back to the United States and requiring a lifetime of care. And we need to make sure they get the care that they deserve. They have earned that.

I am very concerned about our policy in Afghanistan. I'm concerned for a whole number of reasons. I'm concerned because I don't think there is any definition to our policy. Depending on whom you talk to, you get a different answer as to what our goal is. Originally, our goal was to get al Qaeda. After September 11, I, and I think virtually every Member of this House and every Member of the Senate, voted to use force to go after al Qaeda, who were responsible for the terrible atrocities of September 11. It was the right vote then, and I think it's the right vote now.

But al Qaeda, which used to be in Afghanistan, has now moved to Pakistan. We are told by our military experts that there are no al Qaeda in Afghanistan, maybe less than 100, some say. Well, do we need 100,000 American troops to go after less than 100 members of al Qaeda? And if that is not our goal, then this is an example of mission creep where our mission has suddenly enlarged itself without any kind of input from this Congress.

Now some say we need to have more troops there to make sure that al Qaeda never comes back to Afghanistan. Well, al Qaeda has not only been in Afghanistan, they have been in Sudan, they have been in Somalia, they have been in Yemen. They have been in south Florida. Do we want to deploy more troops all over there?

I'm concerned because there is not a clearly defined mission. When I ran for Congress, I said I would never vote to send anybody to war without a clearly defined mission. That's a beginning, a middle, a transition period and an end. I have asked over and over of the previous administration and this administration, At what point does our military contribution to the political solution that you say will happen in Afghanistan, at what point does our military contribution to that political solution come to an end? And I usually get, "Good question." I don't think anybody knows.

I think that that's a problem, and that's something that we need to address.

Let me just say I'm also concerned because Afghanistan is not accustomed to a centralized government. Well, we

have helped give them a centralized government. And the government of Mr. Karzai is corrupt and incompetent. By conservative estimates, we are told that in the last election, 30 percent of his vote was fraudulent. Thirty percent of his vote was fraudulent. And then there was going to be a run-off election, and then the opposition candidate, I think understandably, said, I don't see how you can put together a credible election in a couple of weeks.

□ 1900

And he backed out. So here is our President by default—here's the President by default, who is about to be sworn in again, and the examples of corruption and fraud in his government, the examples of the Afghan government using American taxpayer money for things that they're not intended to be used for—basically stealing from the American taxpayer. The examples of that are too numerous to mention in this debate.

Mr. KAGEN. Will the gentleman yield for a question?

Mr. McGOVERN. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. KAGEN. Mr. McGOVERN, is there any word or any sentence or phrase that the newly "elected" President of Afghanistan could say to convince you that the fraud is behind him, he didn't mean it?

Mr. McGOVERN. The answer is no. He's had his chance. He blew it. I wouldn't trust that government to tell me the correct time after what they have done over the last 8 years. We have been supporting this system for 8 years. This war just didn't start. We have been there for 8 years. At some point, enough is enough. The idea of supporting a government that is corrupt and incompetent and saying that we're going to keep this government in power, we're going to help support them, our men and women are going to die for this government, and then at some point magically everything is supposed to be perfect, that we hand over everything back to this government that has stolen from the American taxpayers, this government that is guilty of fraud—I think that this is a mistake. And 57 Members of this House, bipartisan Members of this House, sent a letter to President Obama saying "no" to the increase in American forces there. And I think there's a lot more that feel that way. I'd like to insert this into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, September 25, 2009.

Hon. BARACK OBAMA,
President of the United States,
The White House,
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT, as you consider the latest assessment of U.S. military engagement in Afghanistan by General Stanley A. McChrystal, we urge you to reject any recommendation to increase the number of combat troops there, particularly in the absence of a well-defined military exit strategy.

We have enormous confidence in the ability of the U.S. military, but we question the effectiveness of committing our troops to a prolonged counterinsurgency war that could last ten years or more, involve hundreds of thousands of troops, and impose huge financial costs on taxpayers already saddled with trillions of dollars of government debt.

According to General Charles Krulak (retired), the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps, the current strategy of protecting the people of Afghanistan with U.S. forces would require an escalation of several hundred thousand additional troops. He warns that our military has already been overburdened: "Not only are our troops being run ragged but, equally important and totally off most people's radar screens, our equipment is being run ragged." It is unlikely that our NATO allies will be able to sustain the political support necessary for continuing such a mission placing even more of a burden on American forces and the American people.

2009 is already the deadliest year for U.S. forces since the war began eight years ago. Fifty-one of the seven hundred and thirty-eight U.S. soldiers who have lost their lives in Afghanistan were killed last month alone.

The national Afghanistan election that U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry hoped would lead to a "renewal of trust of the Afghan people for their government" was a disaster and will almost certainly have the opposite effect. The official Electoral Complaints Commission in Afghanistan has announced that it has found "clear and convincing evidence of fraud." A government already mired in allegations of widespread fraud and incompetence is now facing serious charges and compelling evidence that it has attempted to steal the national election.

A February 2009 ABC/BBC/ARD poll found that only 18 percent of Afghans support increasing the number of U.S. troops in their country. This should come as no surprise. Historically, Afghans have always forcefully resisted the presence of foreign military forces, be they British, Soviet or American. The presence of our forces strengthens the hand of Taliban recruiters. Indeed, an independent analysis early this year by the Carnegie Institute concluded that the presence of foreign troops is probably the single most important factor in the resurgence of the Taliban.

We support your administration's declared goals of defeating Al Qaeda and reducing the global terrorist threat. But, we believe that adding even more U.S. troops to the military escalation that your administration ordered in March would be counterproductive. We urge you to consider and pursue the full range of alternative options including applying the lessons of the Cold War where we isolate and contain those who pose a threat to our national security.

Mr. President, the last thing that our nation needs as it struggles with the pain of a severe economic crisis and a mountain of debt is another military quagmire. We believe that this is why recent polls consistently show that a majority of Americans are opposed to a military escalation in Afghanistan. We urge you to reject any recommendation for a further escalation of U.S. military forces there.

Sincerely,

List of Signatures on Bipartisan Letter to President Obama Urging the Rejection to an Increase in Number of U.S. Combat Troops in Afghanistan:

James P. McGovern, Walter Jones, Ron Paul, Ed Whitfield, Neil Abercrombie, Jim McDermott, Pete Stark, Bruce Braley, Phil Hare, Raúl Grijalva, Lynn Woolsey, Lloyd Doggett, Bob Filner, John Oliver, José Serrano, Barbara Lee, Jerry Costello, Ben Ray Lujan Alan Grayson.

Peter Welch, Kurt Schrader, Tammy Baldwin, Ed Pastor, Yvette Clarke, Sheila Jackson-Lee, John Lewis, Carolyn B. Maloney, Richard Neal, Diane Watson, John Conyers, Jr., Dennis Kucinich, Tim Johnson (IL), Steve Cohen, Keith Ellison, Donna Edwards, Laura Richardson, Michael Honda, Jan Schakowsky.

Daniel Maffei, Steve Kagen, Michael Capuano, Sam Farr, Chellie Pingree, Luis Guterrez, Maurice Hinchey, Maxine Waters, Mazie Hirono, Jared Polis, Roscoe Bartlett, John J. Duncan, Jr., Dana Rohrabacher, Mike Michaud, Earl Blumenauer, Rush Holt, Mike Quigley, Peter DeFazio, Jerrold Nadler.

I think the American people are way ahead of us on this issue. The American people get it. They know we're getting sucked into a quagmire, they know we're getting sucked into a war that has no end, and they don't want any part of it. All I'm simply saying is, if al Qaeda is our enemy, then let's focus on al Qaeda. Let's not get bogged down in a war that has no end.

Alexander the Great found out he wasn't so great in Afghanistan. Genghis Khan couldn't do anything in Afghanistan; the British, the Soviet Union. I think we got bogged down in a war there, and I think there's a strong argument to be made that's one of the reasons the Soviet Union fell.

So we need to debate this thoroughly. We need to know what we're doing. We owe this to our constituents, we owe this to our country. So I hope that before any escalation of American forces occurs that there is a full and thorough debate in this Congress and a vote up or down on whether or not we should send more troops.

I thank the gentleman.

Mr. KAGEN. I couldn't agree more. I really appreciate your being here with your busy schedule. I align myself with your remarks.

We're also joined by Walter Jones from North Carolina. You've had some experience in representing soldiers, haven't you?

Mr. JONES. Yes. Congressman KAGEN, I want to thank you for giving me a chance to be a small part of this debate tonight. I'm glad it's a bipartisan support. Yes, I have Camp Lejeune Marine Base in my district; Cherry Point Marine Air Station; and also Seymour Johnson Air Force Base.

I want to take just a few minutes; a very few. I wanted to share with this debate tonight that this is not—as Mr. McGOVERN said, this is an American issue. It's not a Democrat or Republican, it's not a liberal or conservative. But let me start with two conservatives.

This was written by George Will, a nationally syndicated column of September 1, 2009. George Will, "Time to Get Out of Afghanistan."

"Yesterday," reads the e-mail from Allen, a marine in Afghanistan, 'I gave blood because a marine, while out on patrol, stepped on a (mine's) pressure plate and lost both legs.' Then 'another marine with a bullet wound to the head was brought in. Both marines died this morning.'

'I'm sorry about the drama,' writes Allen, an enthusiastic infantryman willing to die 'so that each of you may grow old.' He says: 'I put everything in God's hands.' And: 'Semper fi!'

George Will further writes, "Allen and others of America's finest are also in Washington's hands. This city should keep faith with them by rapidly reversing the trajectory of America's involvement in Afghanistan, where, says the Dutch commander of coalition forces in a southern province, walking through the region is 'like walking through the Old Testament.'"

Let me read from another conservative, Peggy Noonan. This was written on October 10 in *The Wall Street Journal*. "So far, oddly, most of the debate over Afghanistan has taken place among journalists and foreign-policy professionals. All power to them: They've been fighting it out on op-ed pages and in journals for months now, in many cases with a moral seriousness, good faith, and sense of protectiveness toward the interests of the United States that is, actually, moving. But nobody elected them. We need a truly national debate."

Those two articles, I wanted to read those parts because I want to thank you, Congressmen KAGEN, McGOVERN, and RON PAUL and myself, WALTER JONES, for being here tonight, for this reason: Mr. McGOVERN is exactly right, you're right, so is Mr. PAUL. This is a debate that needs to take place in the daytime with 435 Members of Congress, because our men and women in uniform will go to their death for this country, but they're worn out. There are four and five deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq. And if we don't meet our constitutional responsibility—and I agree with Mr. PAUL, we should declare war, but we don't do that any more. We just pass these resolutions to give the authority to the President. The time has come for the Congress to act on behalf of the American people and, more important, to act on behalf of our troops that we are about to break.

The last point. Today, I wrote Mr. Obama a note and thanked him for taking time to look carefully at what the options should be. And I want to say as a conservative Republican, again, thank you, Mr. Obama, for taking the time, because our boys and girls, our young men and women, they deserve the right decision as it relates to Afghanistan. Thank you.

Mr. KAGEN. I thank you for your remarks, and I align myself with everything you just said. And I want to just express for a few moments some of the experiences I've had as a physician caring for our soldiers—our soldiers who served not just in World War II, but also Korea and Vietnam and elsewhere. And having served as a physician taking care of our soldiers, I can just say it this way. You know, it's really hard to put Humpty Dumpty back together again. Once a soldier has been broken mentally and physically, it is very difficult to put him or her back into the world they came from.

More recently, one of my son's friends from his speed skating days, who was a tremendous athlete, signed up and served in Iraq. And then we got the phone call from Andy's mother that when he came back she was afraid to be in the same house with him because of his anger that would just come out. The only place he felt safe was back in theater in Iraq, guarding not just the people visiting Iraq and Congressmen and women, but the Vice President, then-Vice President Cheney.

A story about a four-star general whom I took care of in 1976, giving him his chemotherapy. I spent a lot of time with him on his way out. And he told me this about the Marines, and it stuck with me forever. The Marines, Dr. KAGEN, the Marines are a killing machine. When politicians call us into a theater, we already know before we go in, within 2 percent, how many body bags to bring. Our purpose is to destroy human life. Don't ask us to build a bridge, don't ask us to build institutions or a new financial system. Our purpose is to destroy human life. That is what the military's job is to do, from his perspective. To destroy human life.

That is the instrument of the military that is being used with a very wide swath today. I think we can do better. I am so proud of this President. And I understand, judging not only by the time that he's taking but also by the number of gray hairs he's generated on his head, that he really is taking this very seriously, trying to find a way forward.

In my view, it's incumbent upon all of us Members of the House to find a way, to help find a way to debate this issue. And I think there are going to be three questions. It's the three questions I ask myself when I look at any bill before the Congress. Number one: Will it work?

So, Mr. President, whatever strategy you're putting together, if you're listening tonight, make sure it's a strategy that's comprehensive, something that's going to work for the American people, because right now we need the help here at home. We should be building a better Nation not overseas but here at home, rebuilding our own infrastructure, the lives and families that we represent. Will it work?

Secondly, can we afford it? What's the real price, not just in dollars and cents, not just in debt accumulation, but in human cost.

The third question is: Is it the right thing to do? Is it ethical? These are the three questions.

Mr. McGOVERN.

Mr. McGOVERN. I agree with the gentleman. I want to again also thank our friend, Mr. KAGEN, for organizing this, and, again, my friend WALTER JONES, who's been unbelievably eloquent on the need for there to be more debate on this issue—I appreciate that—and my friend, Mr. PAUL, for all of his work.

The gentleman raises, I think, a very important point, and that is that

there's a cost to this war. There's a cost in terms of human life. My friend is a doctor. He has seen firsthand the trauma that war can inflict on our soldiers. We have all been to Walter Reed Hospital. We have visited many young men and women who have been wounded in this conflict. But there's also a cost, as he mentions, in terms of dollars and cents.

I always find it somewhat ironic that we have debates on this floor about health care or child care or feeding the hungry or making sure people have adequate housing or even in terms of giving our veterans more. People always get up and say, Boy, we can't spend any more; we can't spend any more. We have to worry about our debt and our deficit.

Well, where is the outrage over the fact that we have spent all this money on these wars in Iraq and Afghanistan off budget? It's all gone on our credit card. I introduced a bill along with Mr. OBEY and Mr. MURTHA last year, a couple of years ago, saying that we should have a war tax. It got shot down in a bipartisan way. But I think that we need to understand that in these wars it is only really a tiny sliver of our country that is actually sacrificing—our soldiers and their families. The rest of us are being asked to do nothing. But understand one thing. These wars are adding incredible amounts to our deficit and our debt. People need to understand there's a cost here. And we need to have that debate.

I'll just tell you one other thing, if I can. Look, I, too, am grateful that the President is deliberating on this issue. I wish the deliberation had occurred before we had the surge that we had a few months ago, because I think it was important to have this debate before any more soldiers got sent there. But I am grateful that he is deliberating. And we don't know what his policy will be. But I'm going to tell you I am personally offended by the fact that the President of Afghanistan is openly taking on the United States, criticizing the United States, for what our motives may be and what our role may be over there when we are supporting him and he is guilty of fraud, he is guilty of corruption. If he were in this country, there would be a special investigation and he would go to jail. This is the extent of the corruption over there. And at some point you have to say that this doesn't work.

We have to ask: Why are we there while al Qaeda's in Pakistan, no longer in Afghanistan? What are we trying to do? I don't think it is worth spending the money or sacrificing the lives to defend a corrupt regime. And I think that is where we are right now.

Mr. Karzai has had 8 years to show what he is about. That's why when you asked me before whether if he adds anything to his speech about finding corruption, whether I will believe him. No, I will not, because he's had 8 years to prove what he's about. And we have had good members of our Foreign Serv-

ice community who have resigned over the fact that this government is so corrupt.

So, enough. We need to develop a policy that has an exit strategy and it includes a flexible withdrawal strategy.

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I want to help the Afghan people. I'm not against development aid. I think we should try to help them any way we can, in a way that is sustainable, in a way that works, and in a way that they want. But let's understand that there is no military solution to be had here, and expanding our military footprint will only allow the Taliban greater propaganda points for recruiting and will cost us dearly. So enough. It's time to reevaluate this policy. It is time to figure out a way to end our military involvement, and we need to do so in a sensible and thoughtful way.

Mr. KAGEN. Mr. PAUL?

Mr. PAUL. I thank you for yielding.

I want to just make a couple of points in closing. The statement at the beginning of this war was made that it's different this time. Even though the history is well known about Afghanistan—it's ancient history, but it's different this time because we're different, and it's not going to have the same result. But so far, you know, they haven't caught Osama bin Laden, and we don't have a national government, really. We don't have really honest elections. We haven't won the hearts and minds of the people. There is a lot of dissension, and it is a miserable place. It is really a total failure, let alone the cost, the cost of life and limb and money. I mean, it is just a total failure. The thought that we would pursue this and expand it and send more troops just blows my mind.

I just want to mention a couple of things that I think are bad arguments. One thing is we are involved there, we have invested too much, and, therefore, we have to save face because it would look terrible if we had to leave. But it is like in medicine. What if we, in medicine, were doing the wrong thing, made the wrong diagnosis? Would we keep doing it to prove that we are right or are we going listen to the patient and to the results?

Mr. KAGEN. You would lose your license.

Mr. PAUL. Yes, that's right. But it seems like politicians don't lose their license. Maybe they should. Maybe there will be more this year or something. But the other argument they make is, if you take a less militant viewpoint as we all do that we're not supportive of the troops. The troops don't believe that. The troops I talk to and the ones Mr. JONES talks to, they know we care about them, and they shouldn't be put in harm's way unless it is absolutely necessary.

This other argument is, well, we have got to go over there to kill them because they want to kill us. Well, like I mentioned before, it wasn't the Afghans that came over here, but if we're

in their country killing them, we're going to create more terrorists. And the more people we send, the more terrorists, and the more we have to kill. And now it's spreading. That's what I'm worried about in this war.

There was one individual—I don't know his name—but they believed he was in Pakistan, so he was part of the terrorist group, the people who were opposing the occupation. So they sent 15 cruise missiles, drones, over looking for him. It took the 15th one to kill him. But 14 landed, and there was an estimate made that about 1,000 civilians were killed in this manner. How many more terrorists have we developed under those circumstances?

I do want to have 1 minute here to read a quote, and then I will yield back. This quote comes from a Russian general talking to Gorbachev, and Gorbachev went into office in 1985, and this was a year later. The general was talking to Gorbachev. Just think, Gorbachev was in office 1 year. He had the problem. He was trying to get out. He didn't get out until 1989. But the general says, "Military actions in Afghanistan will soon be 7 years old," and told Mr. Gorbachev at a November 1986 Politburo session, "There is no single piece of land in this country which has not been occupied by a Soviet soldier. Nonetheless, the majority of the territory remains in the hands of rebels." It reminds me of the conversation between Colonel Tu and Sumner after Vietnam. And Sumner, our colonel, says, You know, we defeated you in every battle in Vietnam. And Tu looked at him, and he said, Yes, I agree, but it was also irrelevant.

I yield back.

Mr. KAGEN. Thank you very much.

And Gorbachev also publicly said recently that there is no military solution. In his words, he said, Say "yes" to domestic considerations, "no" to war. And dialogue, he said, is best along with an international solution. Why? Because there is a dangerous concentration of terrorism and violent extremists in the Hindu Kush area. There is a concentration of violent extremists who seek to solve their problems not by dialogue, not by debate and conversation, but by vengeance and violence. There is a better way of doing things.

Mr. JONES.

Mr. JONES. Congressman, thank you very much for yielding. I will be brief.

I think what's been said by Mr. MCGOVERN, you, as well as Congressman PAUL, is that Congress needs to meet its responsibility to debate these issues. That's why I want to read from the former commandant of the Marine Corps who e-mailed me this information. I just want to read one brief paragraph.

"With all due respect to the 'COIN experts,' to execute the clear, hold and build strategy being put forth will require far more than the 40,000 to 80,000 more troops being discussed. No one who knows anything about counterinsurgency would argue that fact. I can

promise you, our troops are so over-extended right now that they couldn't produce the numbers needed . . . and the equipment would not be available."

One other point. I am certainly skipping around but trying to pick out something that would be of interest to this debate. "Finally, Afghanistan is not Iraq . . . or Vietnam . . . or Iran. It is totally different!"

"This is a country (notice I don't dignify it with the term 'nation') that is totally tribal in nature. It has no real government. You cannot even imagine it as a nation-state that can be dealt with and considered an ally."

This, again, is why we are frustrated, the four of us tonight on the floor. We have seen the pain, the hurt. You've talked about it; JIM's talked about it; RON's talked about it; I've talked about it. This country owes it to the families of our military to debate this on the floor of the House with 435 here on the floor of the House to be part of the debate or we're not meeting our responsibility to the men and women in uniform.

I yield back.

Mr. KAGEN. I thank you and align myself with those comments.

Mr. McGOVERN.

Mr. McGOVERN. Let me just say in closing, I want to associate myself with the comments of my colleague, Mr. JONES.

I also will insert in the RECORD two recent articles, one that appeared in The Washington Post, entitled "U.S. Envoy Resists Increase in Troops: Concerns Voiced About Karzai," in which Ambassador Eikenberry apparently has raised many of the same issues that we have raised here, and the other from the L.A. Times, "Ridding Afghanistan of Corruption Will Be No Easy Task," and it's an article that goes into great detail about the corruption that exists in Afghanistan.

[From the Washington Post, Nov. 12, 2009]

U.S. ENVOY RESISTS INCREASE IN TROOPS

(By Greg Jaffe, Scott Wilson and Karen DeYoung)

The U.S. ambassador in Kabul sent two classified cables to Washington in the past week expressing deep concerns about sending more U.S. troops to Afghanistan until President Hamid Karzai's government demonstrates that it is willing to tackle the corruption and mismanagement that has fueled the Taliban's rise, senior U.S. officials said.

Karl W. Eikenberry's memos, sent as President Obama enters the final stages of his deliberations over a new Afghanistan strategy, illustrated both the difficulty of the decision and the deepening divisions within the administration's national security team. After a top-level meeting on the issue Wednesday afternoon—Obama's eighth since early last month—the White House issued a statement that appeared to reflect Eikenberry's concerns.

"The President believes that we need to make clear to the Afghan government that our commitment is not open-ended," the statement said. "After years of substantial investments by the American people, governance in Afghanistan must improve in a reasonable period of time."

On the eve of his nine-day trip to Asia, Obama was given a series of options laid out

by military planners with differing numbers of new U.S. deployments, ranging from 10,000 to 40,000 troops. None of the scenarios calls for scaling back the U.S. presence in Afghanistan or delaying the dispatch of additional troops.

But Eikenberry's last-minute interventions have highlighted the nagging undercurrent of the policy discussion: the U.S. dependence on a partnership with a Karzai government whose incompetence and corruption is a universal concern within the administration. After months of political upheaval, in the wake of widespread fraud during the August presidential election, Karzai was installed last week for a second five-year term.

In addition to placing the Karzai problem prominently on the table, the cables from Eikenberry, a retired three-star general who in 2006-2007 commanded U.S. troops in Afghanistan, have rankled his former colleagues in the Pentagon—as well as Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, defense officials said. McChrystal, the top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan, has stated that without the deployment of an additional tens of thousands of troops within the next year, the mission there "will likely result in failure."

Eikenberry retired from the military in April as a senior general in NATO and was sworn in as ambassador the next day. His position as a former commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan is likely to give added weight to his concerns about sending more troops and fan growing doubts about U.S. prospects in Afghanistan among an increasingly pessimistic public and polarized Congress.

Although Eikenberry's extensive military experience and previous command in Afghanistan were the key reasons Obama chose him for the top diplomatic job there, the former general had been reluctant as ambassador to weigh in on military issues. Some officials who favor an increase in troops said they were surprised by the last-minute nature of his strongly worded cables.

In these and other communications with Washington, Eikenberry has expressed deep reservations about Karzai's erratic behavior and corruption within his government, said U.S. officials familiar with the cables. Since Karzai was officially declared reelected last week, U.S. diplomats have seen little sign that the Afghan president plans to address the problems they have raised repeatedly with him.

U.S. officials were particularly irritated by a interview this week in which a defiant Karzai said that the West has little interest in Afghanistan and that its troops are there only for self-serving reasons.

"The West is not here primarily for the sake of Afghanistan," Karzai told PBS's "The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer" program. "It is here to fight terrorism. The United States and its allies came to Afghanistan after September 11. Afghanistan was troubled like hell before that, too. Nobody bothered about us."

Karzai expressed indifference when asked about the withdrawal of most of the hundreds of U.N. employees from Afghanistan after a bombing late last month in Kabul. The blast killed five foreign U.N. officials.

"They may or may not return," he said. "I don't think Afghanistan will notice it."

Eikenberry also has expressed frustration with the relative paucity of funds set aside for spending on development and reconstruction this year in Afghanistan, a country wrecked by three decades of war. Earlier this summer, he asked for \$2.5 billion in non-military spending for 2010, a 60 percent increase over what Obama had requested from Congress, but the request has languished even as the administration has debated spending billions of dollars on new troops.

The ambassador also has worried that sending tens of thousands of additional American troops would increase the Afghan government's dependence on U.S. support at a time when its own security forces should be taking on more responsibility for fighting. Before serving as the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, Eikenberry was in charge of the Afghan army training program.

Each of the four options that were presented to Obama on Wednesday were accompanied by troop figures and the estimated annual costs of the additional deployments, roughly calculated as \$1 billion per thousand troops. All would draw the United States deeper into the war at a time of economic hardship and rising fiscal concerns at home.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates have backed a major increase in U.S. forces to drive the Taliban from populated areas and provide Afghan security forces and the government the space to snuff out corruption and undertake development projects. They have argued that only a large-scale counterinsurgency effort can produce a strong Afghan government capable of preventing the country from once again become an al-Qaeda haven.

Those views have been balanced in internal deliberations by the hard skepticism of other Obama advisers, led by Vice President Biden. They have argued for a more narrow counterterrorism strategy that would not significantly expand the U.S. combat presence.

The most ambitious option Obama received Wednesday calls for 40,000 additional U.S. troops, as outlined by McChrystal in his stark assessment of the war filed in late August.

Military planners put the additional annual cost of McChrystal's recommendation at \$33 billion, although White House officials say the number is probably closer to \$50 billion. The extra troops would allow U.S. forces to attempt to take back and hold several Taliban havens in the southern and eastern regions of Afghanistan.

One compromise option put forward by the Pentagon, with the backing of Gates, would deploy an additional 30,000 to 35,000 U.S. troops—fewer than McChrystal's optimal number to carry out his strategy—and rely on NATO allies to make up the 5,000- to 10,000-troop difference. The third option, known by military planners as "the hybrid," would send 20,000 additional U.S. troops to shore up security in 10 to 12 major population areas. In the rest of the country, the military would adopt a counterterrorism strategy targeting forces allied with the Taliban and al-Qaeda, primarily in the north and east, with fighter jets, Predator drones and Special Operations troops that leave a light U.S. footprint on the ground. The military puts the annual cost of that option at \$22 billion.

The most modest option calls for deploying an additional 10,000 to 15,000 troops. While under consideration at the White House, the proposal holds little merit for military planners because, after building bases to accommodate 10,000 or so additional soldiers and Marines, the marginal cost of adding troops beyond that figure would rise only slightly.

[From the Los Angeles Times, Nov. 18, 2009]

RIDDING AFGHANISTAN OF CORRUPTION WILL

BE NO EASY TASK

(By Alexandra Zavis)

Afghans have a name for the huge, gaudy mansions that have sprung up in Kabul's wealthy Sherpur neighborhood since 2001. They call them "poppy palaces."

The cost of building one of these homes, which are adorned with sweeping terraces

and ornate columns, can run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Many are owned by government officials whose formal salaries are a few hundred dollars a month.

To the capital's jaded residents, there are few more potent symbols of the corruption that permeates every level of Afghan society, from the traffic policemen who shake down motorists to top government officials and their relatives who are implicated in the opium trade.

Cronyism, graft and the flourishing drug trade have destroyed public confidence in the government of President Hamid Karzai and contributed to the resurgence of the Taliban by driving disaffected Afghans to side with insurgents and protecting an important source of their funding.

With casualties mounting and a decision on military strategy looming, President Obama and other Western leaders are finding it increasingly difficult to justify sending troops to fight for a government rife with corruption.

This month, when Karzai was declared the winner of an election marred by rampant fraud, the top United Nations official in Afghanistan warned that without major reforms, the Afghan president risked losing the support of countries that supply more than 100,000 troops and have contributed billions of dollars in aid since the Taliban was toppled in 2001.

Karzai has publicly acknowledged the corruption and pledged to "make every possible effort to wipe away this stain." On Monday, the interior minister, national security director, attorney general and chief justice of the Supreme Court joined forces to announce a new crime-fighting unit to take on the problem.

But in the streets, bazaars and government offices, where almost every brush with authority is said to result in a bribe, few take the promises to tamp down corruption seriously.

"It's like a sickness," merchant Hakimullah Zada said. "Everyone is doing it."

In these tough economic times, Zada said, there's one person he can count on to visit his tannery: a city inspector.

The lanky municipal agent frowns disapprovingly when he finds Zada and five other leather workers soaking and pounding hides in the grimy Kabul River and demands his cut—the equivalent of about \$40.

"He says we are polluting the river," Zada says. "So we have to pay every day. Otherwise, he will report us to the municipality, and they will close down our shops."

A 2008 survey by Integrity Watch Afghanistan found that a typical household pays about \$100 a year in bribes in a country where more than half the population survives on less than \$1 a day.

Government salaries start at less than \$100 a month, and almost everything has its price: a business permit, police protection, even release from prison. When Zada was afraid of failing his high school exams, he handed his teacher an envelope stuffed with more than 1,500 Afghanis—about \$30. He passed with flying colors.

The corruption extends to the highest government officials and their relatives. Even Karzai's brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, has long been suspected of cooperating with drug barons, charges he denies.

Abdul Jabar Sabit, a former attorney general who between 2006 and 2008 declared a jihad, or holy war, against corruption, said he quickly learned that a class of high-ranking officials is above the law. They include members of parliament, provincial governors and Cabinet ministers.

"I wanted to tear that curtain down, but I could not do it," he said over tea in his mod-

est sitting room at the top of a rundown apartment block.

As required by the constitution, he said, he wrote repeated letters to parliament requesting permission to investigate charges against 22 members ranging from embezzlement to murder. "Despite all my letters, the issue never made it onto the agenda of either house," he said.

Sabit estimates that he filed corruption charges against more than 300 provincial officials before he was dismissed in 2008. Few were convicted, and "none of them are in jail now," he said.

Obama and other world leaders have told Karzai that they expect him to take concrete steps to back up his promises to fight corruption. Karzai counters that donor countries share responsibility for the problem because of poor management of the funds pouring in for development projects, a concern shared by U.N. officials.

Among the practices raising alarm is the so-called flipping of contracts, which are passed along from subcontractor to subcontractor. Each one takes a cut until there is little money left for the intended project. The result is often long construction delays and shoddy workmanship.

Many foreign and local observers think Karzai can't begin to address corruption until he severs ties with former warlords who helped drive the Taliban from power in 2001 and shored up his administration when U.S. attention was focused on Iraq.

U.S. and other Western officials are pressing Karzai to form a government of competent professionals. But he will have to balance their demands against promises made to ethnic and regional strongmen who helped deliver the votes he needed for a second five-year term.

Western officials were particularly troubled by the recent return from Turkey of Abdul Rashid Dostum, a notorious former warlord who endorsed Karzai's campaign. He is accused of overseeing the deaths of up to 2,000 Taliban prisoners during the 2001 invasion, charges he denies. Karzai's two vice presidents, Mohammad Qasim Fahim and Karim Khalili, are also former warlords accused of rights abuses.

"There are also new figures who will try very hard to get their supporters in government," said Fahim Dashy, editor of the independent Kabul Weekly. "They are coming with empty pockets and they will see this as a golden opportunity to make money, either by legal or illegal ways."

Karzai has said there will be no place in his government for corrupt individuals. But his aides say that dismissals alone won't solve a pervasive and systematic problem.

An investigation by the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption, set up more than a year ago to oversee the government's efforts to fight graft, found that on average it took 51 signatures to register a vehicle. Each signature had its price, for a total cost of about \$400.

"It is hardly surprising if Afghans prefer to bribe policemen on a daily basis to turn a blind eye to their unregistered vehicles," said Ershad Ahmadi, the bureau's British-educated deputy director.

Ahmadi said his office helped streamline the process to four or five steps, and it requires that payments be made directly to the bank, thereby reducing the opportunities for corruption. But without the minister of transportation's cooperation, he said, his team would have been powerless.

"We do not have the necessary powers and independence to fulfill our mandate," Ahmadi said. For a start, it was never given the legal authority to investigate or prosecute corruption—only to refer cases to law enforcement agencies, themselves part of the problem.

"The police are corrupt. The prosecutors are corrupt. The judges are corrupt," Ahmadi said.

It was not clear whether the new anti-corruption unit, which was set up with the help of U.S. and British law enforcement agencies, would be more effective at pursuing individuals who indulge in corrupt practices. It is the third structure set up by Karzai's government to tackle the problem; the first was disbanded after it emerged that the head had been convicted and imprisoned in the U.S. on drug charges.

"The main problem . . . is that people have no confidence about the future," Ahmadi said. "That makes them make hay while the sun shines."

"We need to persuade the people of Afghanistan that there is no returning to the miseries of the past," he said. "The Taliban is not coming back. The international community is not abandoning Afghanistan, and there is going to be slow but steady improvement."

Let me just say, finally, it doesn't take a lot of guts for a Member of Congress to stand up and say, Send more troops. And certainly I guess some think it is easier, more popular to say, Let's send more troops. The more troops we send, we can appear tough on terrorism. All of us want to be tough on terrorism, but what we're arguing here is that what is happening in Afghanistan is not helping us in the war against terror. If it was, if this was a war about holding to account those who committed these terrible atrocities on September 11, I wouldn't be here questioning what we're doing.

I think we're getting sucked into a war with no end. This is a quagmire. There is no end to this. And if we're going to enlarge our military footprint, then I think it is important for the American people to know that we're going to be there for a very, very long, long time; longer than any of us will be in Congress, longer probably than we're going to be on this Earth, that is how difficult it is in Afghanistan. I think, as Mr. JONES said, that we owe it to the men and women who serve in our Armed Forces to make sure that if we're going to send them into harm's way, that we had better be sure that we are doing it because the national security interest of this country is at stake.

I don't like the Taliban. They are a bad group of people, but they are not a threat to national security of the United States. We need to help the Afghan people because they have been neglected, and they have been abused for so long by so many people. We need to figure out a way to do that, and I think we will have better luck and we will encourage more sustainable development without a large military footprint.

But I'm going to end by saying that, at a minimum, we need to know what the exit strategy is here. When the President, after his deliberation, comes up with his policy, he needs to tell us how this all comes to an end, because I think that is the responsible thing to do. We owe that to our troops. We owe that to the American people. This war

has already cost us too much in terms of treasure and human life. I've been there. I think we need to change our policy dramatically, but we need to have this debate. We should not send one more American soldier over to Afghanistan without a full and thorough debate on this House floor about whether that's the right thing to do. And then every Member of this House, Republican and Democrat alike, will have to vote on it.

I am proud of this group that has gathered here today to continue to raise this issue. Mr. KAGEN, I want to thank you in particular for getting us all here tonight. This is an important issue. This is probably one of the most important issues that we're going to deal with during our service in Congress. I hope we get it right. And to me, getting it right is to change our strategy and begin a flexible exit strategy.

I thank the gentleman and yield back.

Mr. KAGEN. Thank you, Mr. McGovern. There has never been a more important time in our Nation's history to get it right, to think it all the way through, and to make certain that we carry out our constitutional duties here in the House of Representatives.

Mr. PAUL.

Mr. PAUL. I would like to just make one more comment as we close the Special Order.

I opened my remarks talking about Barbara Tuchman's "The March of Folly." We are on the same course. I would say it's time to march home. I'm not for sending any more troops. It is very clear in my mind that if the job isn't getting done and we don't know what we're there for, I would say, you know, it's time to come home, because I fear—and it's been brought up. Congressman MCGOVERN has brought it up, and everybody's talked about the finances of this because it is known that all great nations, when they spread themselves too thinly around the world, they go bankrupt. And that is essentially what's happened to the Soviet system. They fell apart for economic reasons.

So there are trillions of dollars spent in this operation. We're flat-out broke, a \$2 trillion increase in the national debt last year, and it just won't continue. So we may not get our debate on the floor. We may not be persuasive enough to change this course, but I'll tell you what, the course will be changed. Let's hope they accept some of our suggestions, because when a Nation crumbles for financial reasons, that's much more dangerous than us taking the tough stance and saying, It's time to come home.

Mr. KAGEN. Thank you, Mr. PAUL.

Mr. JONES, go ahead, and I will wrap up afterwards.

Mr. JONES. I will be brief. I know time is getting limited. I want to thank you, Mr. MCGOVERN and Mr. PAUL for being here tonight because I've seen the pain as you mentioned earlier of PTSD, of TBI. I have seen the

families when a marine came back and who needed counseling, and before it was all said and done, he killed his wife. We do not need to put these men and women under this pressure unless we know what we are trying to achieve and the end point. We need to have this debate. We will figure out some resolution that the four of us and other Members of Congress can force this House to come forward and have this debate.

Thank you for letting me be a small part of tonight.

Mr. KAGEN. I want to thank you, Mr. JONES, Mr. PAUL, Mr. MCGOVERN for this commencement of a conversation and a real discussion about what America's best interests are. I know that when we put our heads together, put our minds together, we'll find a more positive way forward in beginning to solve this problem. I will finish with a brief story.

In 1979, I was in training, in Milwaukee, at the Medical College of Wisconsin, and there training in the specialty of allergy and immunology with me was the son of a senator of Pakistan. And that was the time when Russia invaded Afghanistan. I came into the laboratory, and I said, Nassir, your country is going to be next. And he looked up at me, and he said, Oh, Steve, don't worry. It's easy to get into Afghanistan. It's very hard to get out, and when the Russians leave in 5 or 10 years, they'll be shot in the "blank" when they leave.

That same experience is being experienced today by our soldiers, by our Nation, by our pocketbook. So every time we hear about someone being wounded and injured, whether it's our own soldier or a civilian or an enemy, that bomb and that bullet has real echoes economically here at home. In the end, the exit strategy may be determined, as Mr. PAUL said, by our economy. The question is: Will the strategy work? Can we afford it? And is it the ethical thing to do?

At this point in time, I don't believe we can afford to stay on the current path we're on in Afghanistan and in Iraq. We have to make certain that our soldiers are safe here at home and that we have an economy that can support all of the people that we have the honor of representing.

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AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE WORLD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. HALVORSON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate being recognized to address you here on the floor of the House of Representatives.

Listening to the dialogue of the gentlemen in the previous hour, I generally have a pattern where I will discuss a bit of different viewpoints.

And returning to that subject matter, I understand their concern for

military personnel and their families, for the lives and the health of all of our brave military personnel. In fact, I sympathize and support our military personnel and their families and the entire support network that is there. I've been six times to Iraq, twice to Afghanistan; and I meet with our military personnel as often as I possibly can. And, yes, like every congressional district—and perhaps every congressional district—we've lost soldiers and we've lost airmen and we've lost marines and we've lost sailors. And that has been the case, and it's ever been thus.

So as I listened to the gentlemen who argue that we should have a debate on the floor, it seems as though they come with a common purpose of arguing that we should not be in Afghanistan.

I would make the point, Madam Speaker, that they made the same argument when we were in Iraq. And the points that they made then were very similar to the points that are being made now and that is the position that it's not worth the price. It is a legitimate position to discuss, but I believe it is the one to have that debate before we engage in a war rather than when we're in the floor of it because the dialogue from the floor of this House echoes to our enemies; and they begin to wonder whether the Americans have the resolve to persevere and bring about the sustained effort that's necessary in order to win a war, especially a war that is protracted with an amorphous enemy that is scattered throughout the mountains that has sometimes the support of the network.

The Taliban is our enemy and al Qaeda is our enemy, and there are another six or seven organizations in that part of the world who are defined organizations that are our enemies, Madam Speaker.

But the position taken by these Members back during the Iraq war was to pull out, pull out at all costs, pull out immediately. Simply leave a rear guard to try to avoid being shot in the back as our troops loaded out of Iraq. Let it collapse, if that's what it would be. But they argued it wasn't worth the price—at least some of them, and I believe all of them, that were on the floor taking this position tonight.

And yet in spite of the naysayers, in spite of the distraction, in spite of the 45 votes that were brought to the floor of this Congress and led by the Speaker of the House, NANCY PELOSI, those votes were designed to undermine, unfund, and to damage the resolve of our troops. Those votes that came to this floor—and I have a collected Excel spreadsheet that links to each one of those resolutions, each one of those votes, 45 votes and debates on the floor of this House—these Members can't argue that we didn't have the debate on Iraq. It was pushed by the Speaker of the House. And whatever the motives, it demoralized our troops and encouraged our enemies.

And the result of those resolutions and different acts that were brought to