our State we have a terrible system to do that.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Yes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. We have a bill that we've made reference to that Republicans put forward, H.R. 3400, which specifically addresses tort reform, among many other things. That bill essentially would remove the burden on health care today, which I consider part of the waste, and that is the medical liability premiums; $26 billion annually in medical liability premiums. That's not a price tag that considers the cost of defensive practice, and I understand that. I mean, you invest anywhere from $200,000 to $500,000 coming out of school in loans, and because of lawsuits, and many times frivolous lawsuits, you can lose your practice and lose your home over the ordering of additional tests. That has to be in the neighborhood of somewhere over $100 billion annually.

H.R. 3400, which we have put forward, if that would come to the floor and our colleagues on that side of the aisle would join with us, we could eliminate over $125 billion in unnecessary costs from health care today.

Mr. CASSIDY. Reclaiming my time, we have about 1 minute left together.

We can say that we have really two contrasting visions: one is basically nationalizing the health insurance industry; and although scored as an $81 billion cost savings by the Congressional Budget Office, we have discussed that that's in part because of cuts to Medicare, which means cuts to health care for folks on Medicare, unfunded mandates on the States so that States will force their taxpayers to either pay higher taxes or cut the amount of money available for construction, education, and such like that, to achieve something which frankly seems illusory.

But if we contrast that with what the Republican Party is proposing, which is to put patients in the middle of the process, to say to patients, Listen, once you're there, you are empowered to not only direct your health care, but to control costs. And we have quoted data from Kaiser Family Foundation how that truly happens, as well as the experience of groups like yours with numerous employees.

So at the end we will say that Republicans' ideas, I think, will empower patients, whereas the Democratic ideas appear to empower government.

Thank you for joining us.

AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Madam Speaker, tonight I rise once again to draw the attention of my colleagues and the American people to Afghanistan. I say ''once again'' because over my 20-year career in Congress I have spoken many times and at great length about that distant and desolate country.

My interests and involvement in Afghanistan in fact date back before I was elected to Congress. During the 1980s, I was a special assistant to President Ronald Reagan. While I was primarily a speech writer, I soon learned after arriving at the White House with Reagan's team at the beginning of his administration that the President's words, once spoken and in the Record, become the policy of the executive branch.

As a speech writer, I not only would write the words, but would help determine what would be said. When I realized the influence I would have, I was in awe of where my life had led me.

I had worked hard in Ronald Reagan's gubernatorial campaigns when he first ran for Governor back in California. Later on, I worked on Presidential campaigns when Ronald Reagan ran for President in 1976 and 1980. And when he won in 1980, I went with him to the White House.

I am still honored that President Reagan brought me to the White House with him and that he trusted me enough to hold such a position of writing his words and working with him on his speeches. And I really appreciate the fact that often enough President Reagan backed me up when the remarks that I wrote were a little bit tougher than the policy statements that most of the senior staff of the White House wanted the President to say.

But I worked for President Reagan, I knew that. I didn't work for his staff; I worked for him. And I understood that he wasn't there to be President. He was there to make things happen, to change the course of our country, to redirect the confidence of our people from a downward spiral at that time to an upward thrust.

Those of us who worked for him knew firsthand that an unmistakable goal to which President Ronald Reagan was committed was to bring about a more peaceful world. That lofty goal was not going to be achieved by ignoring or downplaying threats or by sincere expressions of a desire for peace or by holding hands and singing kumbaya. Yes, part of Reagan's strategy to obtain a more peaceful world was rebuilding our military forces, this to deter aggression.

But let us look back and note that he rebuilt our military forces, but only on rare occasion did President Reagan send our troops into troubled spots in the far reaches of the world. He was hesitant to give the green light to use the military in such actions. He did so sparingly. He had a sense not to get us trapped into a prolonged conflict or a no-win situation.

He sent our marines to Lebanon for a specific mission. They were there to accomplish that mission, and they were supposed to leave within days. Then President Reagan was convinced, over his better judgment, to keep the marines in that war-torn city, Beirut, as a stabilizing force—get that, a stabilizing force in the most volatile region of the planet. The result was, of course, 295 dead marines, a setback for our country, but a catastrophe for 295 American families who lost loved ones.

It was especially hurtful to me. I grew up in a marine family. My father was a lieutenant colonel in the United States Marine Corps. I went to school and lived at Camp Lejeune and Cherry Point, North Carolina, when I was in eighth, ninth and 10th grade.

There my brother, who was also going to school with me, met and befriended a man who became his best friend, in fact, David Battle, who shortly after graduating from Camp Lejeune High School joined the Marine Corps. He was still 17 years old. Sergeant David Battle remained my brother's best friend.

And as Ronald Reagan was being inaugurated, right afterwards we went to Camp Lejeune and we visited with his family and with David Battle. He was a sergeant at that time. He had been in the Marines all that time, two tours of duty in Vietnam, and he was looking forward in a few years ahead to retiring from the Marine Corps. And there he had a small boat which he was going to be working the rivers and estuaries in North Carolina, collecting seafood and oysters and clams. He had his life picked out for him. It was going to be a fine retirement. We were very close to that family.

Then I went up and joined the White House staff. A few years later, when the bomb went off in the Marine barracks in Beirut killing 295 of our people, I immediately sought out the list of casualties and Sergeant David Battle, his name was the first on the list of those who had been killed. I went to my office in the White House and I wept. At that point, I pledged to myself that I would never, ever cease to step forward and try to make sense of something that didn't make sense and that would put our people in jeopardy.

President Reagan learned a bitter lesson; and to his credit, against the advice of some very aggressive national security advisers, President Reagan decided not to reinforce the decimated marine force in Lebanon. Instead, he pulled them out before we got stuck in a quagmire that would have been exploited by our major global enemy at that time, the Soviet Union. He took great care not to get us into a fight that we wouldn't be able to get out of.

Let me note, for all the name-calling suggesting Ronald Reagan was a warmonger for building up our Nation's military, Reagan's predecessors, both Republican and Democrat, sent our military into action far more often than did President Reagan. The liberation of Grenada from a bizarre and murderous Communist takeover—and that was just a very small, short operation—and in Lebanon, which turned

out so badly, that's about as far as it goes in terms of Ronald Reagan ordering U.S. troops into harm's way.

So sending American combat troops into battle was not how Ronald Reagan succeeded in making the world a safer place, a world where universal peace would have a chance. Well, number one, to accomplish that, Ronald Reagan built up our military might in weapons, quality of personnel, and advance technology. For example, his famous commitment to a missile defense system, which even today looks like such an important investment to protect us against missiles from Korea or Iran, or perhaps China.

He improved our intelligence, which had been gutted in the 1970s. And, lastly, and most importantly, by implementing a strategy that became known as the ''Reagan Doctrine,'' he helped end the reign of Communist tyranny and made the world a safer place.

It was Charles Krauthammer who first identified that Reagan's words and actions were part of a comprehensive strategy being brought to bear against Soviet communism, a strategy that had been outlined in his speeches. The Reagan Doctrine had nothing to do with sending U.S. troops to far-off lands and defeating an enemy. Reagan instinctively knew there were limits to what the power of government, even the Army, could accomplish; but he also understood the mighty power of people who loved freedom. Ronald Reagan understood that struggling against tyranny, especially Communist tyranny, were America's greatest allies. They would be our brothers and sisters throughout the world of people who were resisting tyranny, especially Communist tyranny.

The Reagan Doctrine, in short, was to achieve our goals of a safer world and a more secure world and a safer and more secure America by supporting those brave souls in various countries who were resisting or fighting pro-Soviet Communist dictatorships, which was our enemy as well as their oppressor.

In Poland, we covertly helped the Solidarity Movement. We bolstered our broadcasting to captive nations in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. We provided funds and resources to the anti-Sandinistas insurgents in Nicaragua, which eventually forced that Marxist gangster regime to have a free election; and when they did, those Sandinistas, those Marxist Sandinistas lost overwhelmingly.

The implementation of the Reagan Doctrine, not just rebuilding U.S. military strength, was what broke the will and the bank account of the Soviet Union. Nowhere was it more effective and harder fought than in Afghanistan, which in the mid-1980s was in the front lines of the Cold War.

A few years into the Reagan administration, I was approached by an old friend, Dr. Jack Wheeler, who, interestingly enough, was the chairman of Youth for Reagan in Ronald Reagan's first campaign for Governor in California back in 1966. That's where I met him. After that, Dr. Wheeler had gone on to earn a Ph.D. in philosophy and had been earning his living as a tour guide which took people on adventure tours into some of the world's most dangerous territories. He was a real Indiana Jones; but more than that, he was a real patriot.

Jack Wheeler wanted to be part of President Reagan's historic effort to reduce communism's influence on this planet and to relegate it to the ash heap of history. Dr. Wheeler's plan was to travel to some of the most inhospitable locations in the world and to contact the leadership of various anti-Communist insurgencies who were there in those far-off places engaged in taking on Soviet military power. I agreed to receive his reports and documentation as he traveled, and after 6 months it began to arrive. He was on the road and into the front lines.

I started receiving information, pictures and notes and descriptions and audiotapes and videotapes in my office in the White House; much of it came through diplomatic pouch from far away embassies.

When Dr. Jack Wheeler returned from searching out the leaders of the various anti-Communist insurgencies, he came directly to the White House where I arranged for him to brief about 30 national security-focused staff members at the White House. What they heard was electrifying. There was a very real opportunity to defeat the Soviet Union and to usher in a new era of world peace.

□ 1945

The Soviet empire was vulnerable, and that's where the Reagan Doctrine started at that particular briefing. Everybody knew it could be a strategy, and we went to work putting it in place and presenting it to the President.

This strategy of the Reagan Doctrine was implemented by men like Dr. Constantine Menges, who had been in the CIA. He was a great academic as well. At that time, he was working with the National Security Council of the White House. Yes, CIA Director Bill Casey was also significant in the success of the Reagan Doctrine—and yes, we have to admit Ollie North as well.

President Reagan, of course, was the real hero of this particular policy. He approved a strategy that defeated the Soviet Union without sending our troops into action against Soviet troops or even coming into direct confrontation with Soviet military forces. We feared a nuclear war for decades. Reagan ended that threat, that nuclear war with the Soviet Union that we all felt someday might happen and obliterate most of mankind. Reagan ended that threat. Communist tyranny was advancing when Ronald Reagan became President. He turned it around and laid the foundation for a collapse of the Soviet Government in Russia. Afghanistan was the tip of the Reagan Doctrine spear.

So, our assistance to the Afghanistan resistance escalated, and as it did, I became more personally involved in this historic effort. In those days, Jack Wheeler would send us firsthand accounts of the frontline fight in Afghanistan. At times, he would bring Afghanistan warriors to my office in the White House. Other times, these rugged fighters—the Mujahedeen as they are called—would come to Washington for secret meetings, and I would end up taking them for lunch at the White House dining room or introducing them to specific people in the bureaucracy and in the power structure who could help them. So I got to know and admire these brave people.

In the late 1980s, the Soviets upped the ante, unleashing Hind helicopter gunships which ripped the Mujahedeen, and they were just destroying them at will. At this moment of desperation, there was a major debate in the White House over the proposal to neutralize the helicopter gunships by providing Stinger missiles, which are shoulder-held missiles that can take out airplanes or helicopters. There was a debate as to whether to provide them to the Afghan resistance.

Ronald Reagan personally made the decision, and the anti-aircraft weapons were sent. It changed the outcome of that battle in Afghanistan, and it changed all of history. Yet it was not just weaponry or even U.S. financing or material support. It was the courage and sacrifice of the Afghan people that carried the day. A million of them lost their lives. It was an overwhelming loss for every family of Afghanistan. Several million were displaced, but all of them stood tall and stood up to the Soviet empire. We were proud to stand by such people.

Yes, Charlie Wilson, who used to be a Member of Congress and a member of the Appropriations Committee, played an important role in getting the money allocated to help these brave people, and other people in Reagan's White House can be proud of what was done to support these Afghan freedom fighters. I would have to say, for as much as we did—Charlie Wilson and those of us in the White House and other people—it's the Afghan people who thoroughly deserve the credit of not only defeating this Soviet Army in Afghanistan but of breaking the will of the Communist Party bosses who controlled the Soviet Union.

When the Soviet Army retreated from Afghanistan, Soviet confidence crumbled, and a new world emerged free from the threat of a Russia controlled by a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship—a Russia committed to Communist world domination.

It was an historic achievement which can be traced to the Reagan Doctrine but also to the blood and to the sacrifice of the Afghan people. How did we repay this enormous sacrifice that made all of us safer, this tremendous gift that we still enjoy? How did we repay it? We walked away and left a

crippled and wounded Afghan population to sleep in the rubble. We didn't even provide them with an ample level of support to clear land mines that were planted all over their country, land mines that we had given them, mines that to this day continue to blow the legs off of Afghan children.

To say America was guilty of ingratitude is to put it mildly, but President Reagan was gone by then. His term of office was over, and George Bush, Sr. was President—George Bush, Sr., the same President who sent American troops all over the world and sent a huge number of deployments of American troops into battle, the same George Bush, Sr. who walked away not only from the Afghans but from the democracy movement in China, leaving them to be slaughtered both in Afghanistan and in Tiananmen Square. No, George Bush, Sr. was no Ronald Reagan.

As time passed, chaos reigned in Afghanistan. During the Clinton administration, our government took steps to do something about the mayhem in that country. Unfortunately, President Clinton's team did exactly the wrong thing. What do I mean?

One of the reasons for the continued bloodletting in Afghanistan after the Soviets left and their puppet regime collapsed—what brought that on and continued that bloodletting was that, during the war, the American Government had agreed to let the Pakistani Intelligence Service—that's the ISI, the equivalent of our CIA—dole out our supplies, American supplies, to the various anti-Soviet Afghan factions. The ISI—that's the Pakistani CIA—was then and is now a hotbed of radical Islam. Much of our military supplies, which were being channeled right through this group, ended up in the hands of radical, radical, the most radical Islamists—people like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Sayoff and other murderous Islamic radicals.

We could have and should have insisted on the direct delivery of U.S. supplies to the insurgent groups, and we would choose the insurgent groups. We did not insist on that. Instead, our own CIA punted. Even to this day, they say, Well, we couldn't have looked at things for the future. You know, how do you expect us not to have a battle in the future when we've got a battle right now to determine? No. You could make a determination of not giving weapons to the worst radicals in Afghanistan. They could have made the determination that, in the long run, it wouldn't have been in our interest, because there were many other moderate Afghan Mujahedeen groups who needed that support and who didn't get anywhere near as much as these radicals did from the Pakistani CIA, the ISI.

Basically, the CIA is giving the ISI leverage, which was then used to promote Islamic fascism. It was also used to secure the Pakistani dominance of Afghanistan, which has been one of the major reasons, dynamics, that has kept Afghanistan in turmoil for decades. So what happened? The situation got worse and worse. The chaos got worse and worse.

During this time, I was one of the few who did not turn my head and walk away. I kept looking for a way out of the insanity and chaos. Yes, there was a way out, but it was a path the Saudis and the Pakistanis did not want to take. There was one man revered by almost all of the Afghan people of every faction and every tribe. It was King Zahir Shah, the king who is in exile, who had led his country for 4 decades through peace and stability. When he was overthrown, Afghanistan ended up in decades of chaos and bloodletting and invasions on a massive scale.

During that time, King Zahir Shah, as he was deposed in a coup, ended up living in exile in Rome. I met with him there on a number of occasions in the 1990s. He was the obvious leader to bring peace and stability to his bloody and torn country but not so obvious to the Pakistanis, who wanted to dominate and control Afghanistan, not so obvious to the Saudis who were doing the bidding of the most violent and anti-Western manifestations of Islamic fascism, and not so obvious to the Clinton administration, whose goal was to go along with the Saudis and the Pakistanis.

I, personally, argued my case to Prince Turki, then the head of the Saudi CIA. Prince Turki had been very involved with supporting the anti-Soviet Mujahedeen during the war against the Soviet occupation. I begged with him and pleaded with everyone else who would listen. King Zahir Shah was a moderate Muslim leader who would bring peace and stability. No. What the Saudis and the Pakistanis wanted was a radical Islamic force that would supposedly unite the devout Muslims of Afghanistan but, more importantly, would be a Pakistani and Saudi ally, an ally who would be willing to do their bidding.

What did the Clinton administration do? What did the Clinton administration want? Well, what they wanted was to make the Saudis and the Pakistanis happy. So, in the mid-1990s, the Taliban emerged. They are not the same as the Mujahedeen. Many Americans mistakenly believe that the people who fought against the Soviet Army, who were named the Mujahedeen, later became the Taliban.

By and large, it was the Mujahedeen later on who drove the Taliban out of power. It was the Taliban which had been kept as a reserve force, you might say, going to these moderate schools in Pakistan until after the Soviets had been defeated. The lion's share of Mujahedeen leaders, who fought against the Soviet troops, were not part of the Taliban.

Well, I hoped for the best after it was clear that the Taliban was anointed by the Clinton administration, by the Saudis and the Pakistanis, and they took over Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan. I hoped for the best for about 2 weeks. I was just hoping. People told me maybe they'll come through, and maybe they'll start moderating, but my worst nightmares began to come true after just a few weeks.

A brutal fundamentalist, Islamic movement that hated the West was taking control of Afghanistan, supported by the United States Government in the name of stability. That was it. In the name of stability, we're going to support these radical fundamentalists and other tyrannical forces.

For several years, at this time in the 1990s, I was a voice in the wilderness here in the House, warning that the creation and support of the Taliban would come back to haunt us someday. I had no idea how true these warnings were, and how much it would hurt us. During that time in the 1990s, I met with the leaders of Afghan tribes and ethnic groups in and out of Afghanistan in an effort to forge an anti-Taliban coalition. The core of the plan was to bring back Zahir Shah, King Zahir Shah, as the focal point for dislodging the Taliban—someone everyone could rally around, who would treat people fairly and create a peaceful, more democratic country.

At the end of the year 2000, after a Herculean effort, there was a meeting that had been arranged of all the Afghan factions except for the Taliban. After that meeting, King Zahir Shah agreed to return to Afghanistan to hold a Loya Jirga in July of 2001. The Loya Jirga, let me note, is a convention of tribal elders which was to take place in the territory that was controlled by Commander Masood. Commander Masood is a man who was never beaten by the Soviets. He was also never beaten by the Taliban, and he was one of the last commanders who held any part of territory in Afghanistan. The rest was controlled by the Taliban.

Considering this agreement of Zahir Shah to go to Commander Masood's territory and have a Loya Jirga to talk about the future governance, the governance of Afghanistan, this was a great step forward, and this agreement was forged despite the opposition of the Clinton administration. It was a great accomplishment just to get that agreement. Those involved in making this happen included International Relations Committee Chairman Ben Gillman; Tom Lantos, a senior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee; as well as a few others but just a few.

After George W. Bush was elected, I was able to meet several times with his new National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, whom I knew from the Reagan days. Well, we discussed Russia, and we talked extensively about Afghanistan. I pitched the idea of overthrowing the Taliban using the coalition that I'd been building—the anti-Taliban coalition.

Well, the idea wasn't rejected, but no action was taken, at least until 9/11.

The 9/11 slaughter of 3,000 Americans was planned and set in motion by bin Laden's al Qaeda terrorist network, then allied with the Taliban, which was headquartered there in Afghanistan and was operating freely in that country.

□ 2000

On 9/11, I was given an incredible opportunity to utilize the knowledge that I had gained and the relationships I had built in that region over the many years. It was the opportunity to make a significant difference for my country at a time of great chaos and crisis.

Only a few days before, al Qaeda/Taliban assassins had murdered Commander Masood. I had met with Commander Masood in Afghanistan in one of my several forays into Afghanistan during the 1990s. I visited him in a mountain hideout, his retreat, or his fortress you might say, and we talked for a long time. We had been in contact ever since the time in the Reagan White House when he sent his brother to see me. And we had negotiated and kept in touch verbally, but that was the first time I met him. Our friendship was already in existence, and by that meeting, it really was solidified.

And then Commander Masood in the days before 9/11—and we'd been looking forward to having this meeting in his territory with the King, Commander Masood was blown apart in an assassination scheme—of course, Taliban and al Qaeda scheme. And I remember then how much despair that I had that this great man who held such promise to be a leader of his country, like others who were killed during a war against the Russians and now the Taliban, so many young leaders killed in Afghanistan—a brave man, Abdul Hawk, lost his life.

But Commander Masood, I sat down in my office in total despair and I said, I gotta get control of myself. Why did they kill him? Why did they do that now? I thought it out, and I realized that they had killed Commander Masood in order to prevent the United States from having an avenue to counterattack against them for something that they were going to do to us. It made all the sense in the world.

They were going to have a major attack on the United States, and it must have been something that was going to be humongous and cause much loss of life or they wouldn't have gone out of the way to kill Commander Masood because we wouldn't have wanted to try to retaliate against them, to use him to retaliate against them for something they did to us. Well, yes, that was exactly the case. And I realized there would be a monstrous attack on the United States, so I immediately called the White House.

I called the White House. I called for National Security Adviser Condi Rice, and her assistant came on the phone and said, Congressman ROHRABACHER, what is it? And I said, I've got to see her. I've got to warn her about an imminent, major terrorist attack that is going to happen very soon in our country. There will be a huge terrorist attack. I need to talk to her about it and give her some details of what I think is going to happen.

And the aide said, You know, Congressman, she's talked about Afghanistan before. We know you're an expert on that, but she can't see you today. She's a busy person. But if you come over tomorrow at 3 o'clock, she will talk to you, and I will put you on the schedule.

So I was on the schedule at 3 o'clock to talk to Condoleezza Rice to warn her of an imminent major terrorist attack. That's what the schedule says. The day that I was supposed to meet her was 9/11. That day, the planes began flying into the buildings at 8:45.

So on that horrible day, 9/11, I understood what was happening, and I immediately began to provide information and contacts to the CIA, Defense Department, and National Security Council. The team who had helped me during the years organizing an anti-Taliban coalition was now brought to play to help America plan its counterattack.

Charlie Santos, a confidant of Afghan Uzbek leader General Dostum, was a treasure house of information and direction for our government and part of my team during the years before. Al Santoli on my staff ended up talking directly via satellite cell phones to village and tribal leaders. One of them, for example, was so-called warlord Ishml Khan, thus paving the way for the injection of our special forces troops.

Paul Berkowitz, who now works for me, then working for Chairman Ben Gilman, opened doors throughout the administration. Paul Behrends, a Marine major, a former member of my staff who had been in Afghanistan with me and knew the players in the territory, was there to help. And Dusty Rhodes, an expert from the intelligence community, he was on my staff at the time and had very special skills that were incredibly important to helping us determine how to proceed.

I have never sought much credit for the small but significant contribution my team made after 9/11. It's like that saying Reagan had framed on his desk: ''There is no limit to what a person can accomplish if he doesn't care who gets the credit.''

Well, our military originally wanted to send in heavy American Army divisions into Afghanistan; basically, what we did in Iraq. They would be supplied by depots located in the northwestern provinces, provinces of Pakistan where that invasion would have been staged from. It would have been a disaster had we done that. The northwestern provinces are the most anti-American territories in the world, which, right now, people are struggling against Taliban control over those areas.

Our team managed to convince America's decisionmakers to come at Afghanistan from the north through Uzbekistan, and most importantly, to let our Afghan coalition do the fighting. Most of those making this decision on which way to go—whether to send in the big heavy divisions or not—had never even heard of Tarmez, which is an Uzbek city on the Afghan border that later served as our staging area.

They had, of course, never been at the northwest provinces, nor did they know about the strategically important Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif, which later turned out to be pivotal in the defeat of the Taliban. I had been to those cities. I had been to those places, and our little team knew the territory and the forces at play. And luckily, some high-level decisionmakers at the DOD and the CIA and, yes, the National Security Council listened to us.

Too many Americans don't fully appreciate the fact that it was an army of Afghans—that was called the Northern Alliance—that defeated the Taliban and drove them out of their country. Only about 200 U.S. military personnel were there at the time. Only 200 men, boots on the ground, yes. Only 200 men were there of American military personnel. And we gave the Northern Alliance the financial support and supplied them the arms and the ammunition and, most importantly, the air cover they needed to defeat the Taliban.

We also promised to rebuild their country, and that's how the Taliban—who were immensely more powerful than they are today—that's how they were defeated after 9/11.

So 7 years have passed, and it appears now that America is pulling defeat out of the jaws of victory. American political restructuring and military firepower has not been working, and it should be of no surprise that it's not working. We can defeat any army and dislodge any tyrant or regime. We cannot conquer or subjugate a people. Once we are viewed as occupiers and not liberators, we lose.

The people of Afghanistan are devout Muslims. Yet after 9/11, large numbers of them came to our side and fought against and defeated the Taliban and al Qaeda Muslim extremists. Oh my, how history repeats itself.

After promising to rebuild their war-torn country, after the victory over the Taliban, we then, instead of keeping our word, moved on and committed ourselves to freeing Iraq from the Saddam Hussein dictatorship and helping those people. That commitment dramatically undercut our ability to make the kind of effort and expenditure of resources that the brave Afghan people had a right to expect at that time.

Well, they fought the Russian Army and helped end the cold war, and it was an enormous price that they paid to do that. Then after 9/11, they joined us again to fight radical Islam's grip on their country, which had been used as a base camp for the 9/11 attack that slaughtered 3,000 Americans. The Afghans are brave and honorable people. We have to do justice by them. We have

to yet pay back this debt that we still owe them.

Instead, over the years, we have sent our military with its incredibly sophisticated weapons into Afghanistan. When the Taliban were driven out, 90 percent of the Afghans loved us and they were doing the fighting against the extremists. Now, years later, our troops are doing the fighting and the hearts of the Afghan people are turning against us.

Afghanistan is a country of 4,500 villages. Each has a militia. Either the villages are with us or they're against us. We've made the age-old mistake of thinking this society of villages and fiercely independent people can be pacified and controlled by our forces or those of a central authority in Kabul. Trying to impose centralized government power on these villages rather than approaching them as friends who are there to help has turned friend into foe, ally into enemy.

We can defeat a foreign army, be it a German or Japanese military power of World War II or Republican Guard of Saddam Hussein. We cannot defeat the country of Afghanistan. We cannot occupy or control its people. We can be their friend, and if we do so, we will win. If we attempt to use our military might to force an outcome based on control and pacification of a vast and inhospitable countryside, we will eventually lose. The 4,500 villages will be with us or against us. They will be with our enemy, radical Islam, or they will be against it.

Just as I was in a position to influence enormously important decisions after 9/11, I believe I am here at this moment to try again to influence a decision that will have horrendous negative consequences if not made with an understanding of Afghanistan and its people.

Today we are facing a decision to send or not to send 35,000 more combat troops into Afghanistan. Thirty-five thousand more troops, by definition, means Americans will do more fighting. It is a wrong strategy, a strategy that will not work and will cost too much financially and cost too much in terms of the lives of our military personnel. A better plan is to re-earn the loyalty of these brave and long-suffering people.

Afghan children are the most beautiful kids in the world, but this country has the world's highest infant mortality rate. It tears at the heart and soul of these people that they're losing their children. Let's help them change that.

The money needed to finance sending 35,000 more combat troops into Afghanistan is a mind-boggling 35 billion—that's ''billion''—dollars per year. A commitment of even a small portion of this would bring life-elevating progress throughout that land of 4,500 villages. It would win the goodwill of those villages and their militias. After that, they could become a real asset. They would be a real force against radical Islam. And yes, we need to re-earn the loyalty and gain the loyalty of our Afghan allies. After 9/11, we disarmed the Northern Alliance. We need to re-arm them, and we need to rebuild a solid friendship with those people.

Building a central army, however, in Kabul is not the way to defend against Taliban insurgents. Sending in more U.S. combat troops is not the answer, nor is just building up a central army in Kabul. Reaching out to the villages and tribal elders and establishing local militias, perhaps buying their goodwill if need be, these are the things that will work. And it will cost a pittance compared to $35 billion more per year for 35,000 more troops who may end up turning off the people of Afghanistan rather than enlisting them to our side.

Opposing our enemy by arming and financing local and village leaders was a strategy that worked against the Soviet Army, and it worked against the Taliban after 9/11, and it will work again. Let us admit that our goals these last 7 years, that the goals that we have actually tried to put in place these last 7 years were wrong. The goals were wrong. Not just the implementation. The goals were wrong.

Honest and decentralized government in Afghanistan should have been the goal. Decentralized. Honest and decentralized, perhaps representative, government in Afghanistan should have been the goal, not creating a central power, the fallacy that you can't have a real country unless you really have a government in charge in the capital that then controls the rest of the country. That was a total illusion, and it was wrong. It was never something we could have accomplished.

Instead, what we wanted to do instead of a decentralized government, we wanted to establish a national power, and we wanted to have national power wielders with whom we could do business. Karzai was never someone who had any loyalty of the Afghan people.

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He was not a political force in that country. We forced Karzai on the Afghan people after 9/11, and we forced the king into a more subservient role when he returned rather than a role where he could have selected true Afghan leaders to help rebuild their country, leaders that would have been honest instead of what we have now in the Karzai administration, which is nothing more than a kleptocracy, gangster regime.

In the United States our schools are run locally. Remember this. Our schools are run locally. Our police are run locally. The criminal justice system is run at the State or local level. What would have happened if somebody had come into our country during the American revolution and said, No, we have to reconfigure it so that all the power's in Washington and all the appointees are going to be in Washington D.C., and that's where all the power is going to be and you're going to have to have a centralized government. Our Founding Fathers would have revolted against that, because that wasn't consistent with how we knew that freedom was going to be preserved; it wasn't consistent with representative government and democracy. No, we wouldn't have done that.

Well, let me just note, what we've got there in Afghanistan and what we've tried to establish in Afghanistan is a Kabul-based centralization of authority. How can we expect the people of Afghanistan to accept something—centralization of power—which is totally contrary to their own decentralized society which they have had for thousands of years, especially when the centralized authority that we're trying to foist on them has been corrupt and in no way reflects the consent of the governed?

Members of parliament there are elected in a slate. The people there in that country don't have individual districts that represent them, individual congressmen who are elected from individual districts. They aren't even elected at specific villages. No, there is not one person in that government who most people in Afghanistan can identify as someone for whom they voted for to represent them, not in the parliament, not in the Kabul government, because there's no congressmen that are elected. They're elected at a province-wide level which means it's a slate and almost all of the villages, nobody knows anybody on the slate because the slate is dictated politically from Kabul which, of course, is a corrupt center of power.

Do we expect the Afghan people to just accept orders from people who they haven't voted for, whom they don't know? And the corruption and the ineptitude of that central authority, of course, which we have foisted upon them is not an acceptable alternative. We're not giving them an acceptable alternative. No wonder why the Taliban is being considered. All this means is that local people have no honest system to settle disputes, to determine rights or to organize the effort that's needed to elevate the condition of this suffering and poverty-stricken people. These people are devout, but they're not fanatics. But they will acquiesce again to the Taliban Islamic fringe if it is at least honest at its core as compared to visiting crooks who are claiming the right to make decisions that have the finality and power of law but people whom they don't even know who they are, much less have voted for them.

What we do now is what we should have done originally. Let the local villages appoint their own elders to positions of local authority. Let them pick a wise person who they know to be a judge and make decisions for them locally. Let the village militias become part of a National Guard. Give them uniforms, give them guns and ammunition, give them communication gear,

and use the central army to back them up, not to disarm them for fear of their sympathies.

Yes, the U.S. can remain a major military force in Afghanistan, but we cannot and will not succeed if we believe our military forces, foreign fighters in a foreign land, can bring a recognizable military victory. Adding more troops feeds the illusion that we can win some kind of victory if we just exercise more power and send more military personnel. Alexander the Great left the bones of his entourage there as did the British and, yes, the Russians. The sword has never conquered these people. It may for a limited time give an appearance of stability but, instead, will feed a simmering antipathy that will not cool but only grow hotter and more ferocious. Again, we can defeat any army. We cannot conquer and subdue the nation of Afghanistan. Only Afghans, from the bottom-up, can control and pacify their countryside.

There is still time for our action in Afghanistan to end with honor and success, for the Afghans and for Americans. They can still have a great ending to all of this. The first step towards that is to signal to the whole nation of Afghanistan, send them a message heard in every corner of those 4,500 villages, and that is that the United States is not trying to foist upon them a corrupt central government. To accomplish this, we must recognize the travesty of this last election. While we cannot have an entirely new election, we can insist on a runoff between Messrs. Karzai and Abdullah. In this runoff election, a respected international organization, perhaps the OSCE, could be given a free hand to correct problems as they appear and throw out illegal ballots if necessary. After the elections we should commit ourselves to a new course, a new course that respects the traditional village structure and reaches out with assistance to improve health, water, education and agriculture in Afghanistan. Yes, at first the risk of such a plan will be great for the individuals who are willing to go to the front lines with our helping hand offensive. But this approach, a helping hand, will be far more effective than a mailed fist approach. It will take money. We may need to begin to buy goodwill. Maybe we need to offer to put some people on consulting fees at the local level, some of these local leaders and village elders. Well, that can be done; and we can also do things like, for example, some expenditures that prove our good faith, like setting up clinics or schools or economic projects that will improve the life of those villagers. It may take courage and we will lose some people. But in the end the expense and the loss of life will be far less than a warrior-focused alternative. And, yes, fighting will be necessary. The Taliban are evil. They are inseparable from al Qaeda because they are the same radical extremists. We know that. Anybody who is a dreamer, who thinks that, well, we can bring back the Taliban but we can separate them from al Qaeda, that is just so much nonsense. But the Taliban need not come back. There is opposition to the Taliban if we offer a tangible alternative. Let us build up the militias in the towns and villages across that desolate country and let these militias do the fighting. We can and should help establish a militia system and back them up, from the air or even on the ground if necessary. But it will be the Afghans, not the Americans, who are on the front lines of this effort.

How much will it cost us to deploy 35,000 more troops? $35 billion. What I'm talking about is a strategy that would cost a minuscule amount of that and have a much greater chance of success. Let's stand down these troops. Let's let these 35,000 American military personnel stay home with their families. And let's send to the Afghans a portion of what that additional troop cost would be.

Every time in the past we got to this situation, it was either send those troops and spend the money for them or not give them anything, or just give them a little bit. No, let's give them a substantial infusion into their society of wealth and expertise that can help build that society. That will be so much cheaper and more cost effective, and with a billion dollars, yes, you can buy the loyalty of a number of Afghan leaders at the village and provincial and tribal level that can get us over the hump. Now that's certainly better than spending money to send people over there to kill more Afghans. We can be their partners in building and improving the life of the Afghan people. And it will bring change to that country and have a much greater chance at success.

Let me end this tonight with one last story, which I didn't mention. Before I came to Congress, I actually went into Afghanistan with an Afghan military unit, a mujahadeen unit, who were fighting the Soviet Union. And I had met so many of these leaders, I told them one day that I would join them in a great battle if I had left the White House. And so I went to the battle of Jalalabad as part of a small military force. All we had were AK–47s and rocket-propelled grenades. I had a beard. I was in Afghan garb. I was just one of the team, one of that unit. Our job was to protect and to work with a rocket unit that was about to attack and give them protection, about to launch rockets into a Soviet position outside the city of Jalalabad.

As we marched to the battle of Jalalabad, it was late at night and the bombs and things were going off, you could hear the explosions and see them; and I was with about 120 Afghans by that point, worming our way through the hillsides toward the battle. A young Afghan lad, perhaps 16 years old, an AK–47 over his shoulder, came up to me and said, ''I understand that you're in politics in America.'' I said, ''Yes, I am.'' He said, ''Well, are you a donkey or an elephant?'' I said, ''Well, I'm an elephant.'' He said, ''I thought you were.''

And as we talked, I said to him, ''What do you plan to do once this war with the Soviets is over?'' And as we marched toward that battle, he said, ''I want to be an engineer or an architect. I want to rebuild my country. I want to rebuild my country. And I know, with you Americans, we can do that.''

I don't know whatever happened to that young man. He may never have survived that battle. I left after a week and I was back here in the safety of our country. I only could have died of diarrhea or by drinking bad water. He could have stepped on a land mine. A Russian plane napalmed one part of the group that I was with. He could have died in something like that. But that young man, 16 years old, is now probably 40 years old. We owe him a lot. We can only hope that he is still that idealistic, that he wants to work with Americans to rebuild his country and to see that his family has a better chance even though life now has passed his generation by.

Life didn't have to pass his generation by. We should have done our duty by them. We have a chance to do that again, to remake that, to redo that and to do what's right, and it will be successful for us as well as for the people of Afghanistan. Let us not send more combat troops there. Let us not put more of our people at risk or have our people killing more Afghans in the name of obtaining some illusionary victory. Let us reach out and win the loyalty of these people who have shown their loyalty to us time and again. We can do that now with just a minor expenditure. Give us $5 billion to rebuild that country and to help build a militia system so they can protect themselves. That is what America is supposed to be all about.

That young man had a dream. That young man now is 40 years old, hopefully somebody who still has faith in us, we need to reach out to him and the other young people of Afghanistan and say we can make this a better world. We are willing to work with you to do that. We respect your society and structure and your traditions, and it's not in any way contradictory to what America believes in local government and democracy, and people choosing their own government and those people who make laws for them.

It's time for America to stand for principle. I hope that my Republican colleagues will understand that every time someone in the military—and I respect General McChrystal. Just because he is in the military, he does not have ''the plan'' that will necessarily bring about the type of change in a society or another kind of dynamic rather than a military dynamic. Many times military officers don't understand that. We should stand up after thinking about it and doing what is

right and listen to those of us who have been in Afghanistan over these years to try to have a policy that's a positive policy that can succeed, and not just looking for an illusionary military victory that will always be out of our grasp.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I yield back the balance of my time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mrs. EMERSON (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today and the balance of the week on account of her stepdaughter's wedding.

Ms. MCCOLLUM (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today on account of official business in the district.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. WEINER) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. LANGEVIN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. WEINER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WATSON, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. FOXX) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. MCCLINTOCK, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. POE of Texas, for 5 minutes, October 22.

Mr. WOLF, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. JONES, for 5 minutes, October 22.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas, for 5 minutes, today, October 20, 21 and 22.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, October 20, 21 and 22.

Mr. WESTMORELAND, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. WAMP, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BOOZMAN, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. FOXX, for 5 minutes, October 20, 21 and 22.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table, and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 1694. An act to allow the funding for the interoperable emergency communications grant program established under the Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 to remain available until expended through fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, October 16, 2009, at 11 a.m.

EXPENDITURE REPORTS CONCERNING OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL

Reports concerning the foreign currencies and U.S. dollars utilized for Speaker-authorized official travel during the first quarter and third quarter of 2009, pursuant to Public Law 95–384 are as follows:

REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, JOINT COMMITTEE ON TAXATION, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, EXPENDED BETWEEN JULY 1 AND SEPT. 30, 2009

Name of Member or employee	Date		Country	Per diem [1]		Transportation		Other purposes		Total	
	Arrival	Departure		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]
HOUSE COMMITTEES											
Please Note: If there were no expenditures during the calendar quarter noted above, please check the box at right to so indicate and return. ☒											

[1] Per diem constitutes lodging and meals.
[2] If foreign currency is used, enter U.S. dollar equivalent; if U.S. currency is used, enter amount expended.

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL, Chairman, Oct. 2, 2009.

REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, COMMITTEE ON RULES, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, EXPENDED BETWEEN JULY 1 AND SEPT. 30, 2009

Name of Member or employee	Date		Country	Per diem [1]		Transportation		Other purposes		Total	
	Arrival	Departure		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]
Hon. James P. McGovern	8/23	8/25	Kuwait		109.00		3,954.10				4,063.10
	8/25	8/27	Bahrain		248.00						248.00
	8/27	8/29	Kabul, Afghanistan		26.00		4,151.20				4,177.20
Committee total					383.00		8,105.30				8,488.30

[1] Per diem constitutes lodging and meals.
[2] If foreign currency is used, enter U.S. dollar equivalent; if U.S. currency is used, enter amount expended.

HON. LOUISE MCINTOSH SLAUGHTER, Chairman, Oct. 7, 2009.

(AMENDED) REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, EXPENDED BETWEEN JAN. 1 AND MAR. 31, 2009

Name of Member or employee	Date		Country	Per diem [1]		Transportation		Other purposes		Total	
	Arrival	Departure		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]
Hon. Eliot L. Engel	2/16	2/18	Mexico		699.50		(3)				699.50
	2/18	2/20	Nicaragua		337.32		(3)				337.32
	2/20	2/22	Jamaica		775.68		(3)				775.68
Committee total											1,812.50

[1] Per diem constitutes lodging and meals.
[2] If foreign currency is used, enter U.S. dollar equivalent; if U.S. currency is used, enter amount expended.
[3] Military air transportation.

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN, Chairman, Oct. 5, 2009.