

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentlewoman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, today is the 162nd time that I have come to the floor during Special Orders to discuss the U.S. role in Iraq. Unfortunately, very little has changed on the ground in Iraq over the course of these last 3 years and 162 speeches. Unfortunately, also, official visits to the region by our administration and those who represent the United States of America must still be in secret because the area is so very, very violent.

Our troops increasingly face snipers, roadside attacks, ambushes, and improvised explosive devices, IEDs. Bombings continue to kill and wound nearly 100 Iraq civilians daily, and the country has slid into a civil war. One thing that has changed is this, the United States is now playing the role of occupier.

President Bush claimed that the U.S. would go into the Iraq conflict as a liberator. These days, the more accurate statement is that the United States is an occupier. Our brave men and women of the Armed Forces have not been trained or equipped for this very mission. They are doing the very best they can under the circumstances, but their civilian superiors have let them down. Right now, the best way to support our troops is to set forth a plan to bring them home.

In light of all of this, tomorrow several of my colleagues and I will introduce a bill that will revoke the President's Iraqi war powers. This legislation, the Iraq War Power Repeal Act of 2006, will return the war powers for Iraq back to Congress, back where our Founding Fathers intended.

According to the President, all major war combat was completed just 6 months after Congress authorized the use of force. In fact, he said this while standing aboard an aircraft carrier before a banner reading "Mission Accomplished." Therefore, the United States has no longer been at war since that statement of his 6 months into the war, but rather carrying out an occupation with absolutely no end in sight. The American and the Iraqi people want the United States troops out of Iraq; they want them home where they belong.

Over the objections of many House and Senate Members 3½ years ago, the House voted to support the war in Iraq. We did not vote to support an occupation in Iraq. That is why our goal tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, is to have the congressional leadership allow an up-or-down vote on the occupation. I urge all of my colleagues to cosponsor the Iraq War Powers Repeal Act of 2006 to end this madness once and for all, to stand up for our troops, to bring them home

THE PROTECTION AND EVACUATION OF AMERICAN CITIZENS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of turn.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Illinois is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, the Nation has been focused on the war declared by Hezbollah against Israel this past week. And while most of the media focused on stories of the conflict in Israel or Lebanon, they have not covered an aspect of the story critical to our fellow citizens, the protection and evacuation of American citizens from this conflict.

On the day that Hezbollah started this war, we estimated that there were over 20,000 Americans in Lebanon.

□ 2000

I want to first commend our ambassador in Lebanon and the U.S. embassy team in Beirut for rapidly assembling the plans and data on the Americans to be saved. The U.S. Government regularly plans and sometimes executes what is called a noncombatant evacuation operation, or NEO in Pentagon parlance, to rescue Americans abroad. The scale of the Lebanese NEO was very, very large. This operation, assembled on very short notice, responded remarkably to a rapidly changing, massive movement of our fellow citizens.

Some of the unsung heroes of the Lebanon NEO are the men and women of the United States Navy and Marine Corps. I want to give special thanks to the crews of the USS *Nashville*, the USS *Trenton*, and the USS *Whidbey Island*. Along with the merchant vessel *Orient*, the crews of these U.S. navy vessels rescued thousands of Americans from Lebanon over the last several days. The crews of these ships were backed by U.S. Marines flying helicopters to save the people in most urgent need.

I also want to thank the men and women of the U.S. Transportation Command who arranged military airlifts for Americans living in Cyprus, and now Turkey, to complete their trips home to the U.S.A.

We must also note the outstanding contribution of the State of Maryland and its governor, Governor Ehrlich, who welcomed them at Baltimore Washington International Airport.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. John Michael of my district called me from Lebanon to ask for his support. I arranged for his registration and quick contact with the U.S. embassy there. Thanks to the work of the United States Navy, the Marine Corps, the State Department and the Transportation Command, Dr. Michael, his wife Christine and their children, Daniel, Ramson, Edessan and Kamber, all from my district, were

caught in Lebanon, but now were rescued by the U.S. military and State Department. But for this operation, they might still be in harm's way, but thanks to the work of these professionals, the men and women of the State Department, Navy and Marine Corps, they are home in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, we have saved over 5,000 Americans to date, and I am told today that the number of Americans seeking to leave Lebanon is now declining. We will soon be the first Nation to use this large logistical effort to begin a massive humanitarian aid lift to support the people of Lebanon itself.

Mr. Speaker, take a moment tonight to thank the young Americans who serve on the *Nashville*, *Whidbey Island* and *Trenton*. Due to their training and professionalism, they were there exactly when thousands of their fellow American citizens needed them to escape from Lebanon.

ESCALATING CONFLICTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to discuss the escalating conflicts in the Middle East, and bearing in mind that the answer to real stability throughout that region is a resolution to the half century old Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a two-State solution with negotiations ongoing. That has not happened during the lifetime of this administration. In fact, they have ignored that completely.

The second solution is to decouple U.S. foreign policy from our reliance on the oil regimes in the Middle East which supply the largest share of this country's dependence on imported petroleum.

Those are the two answers. We are getting distracted by a lot of other activities in the region, but without a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a two-State solution, and this country being able to stand on its own two feet again, and not have to beg any repressive society for oil, we will not find a solution for security for the American people at home nor abroad.

The situation is worsening. War is an abandonment of reason, and it is critical for Members of Congress to stand for a path to peace, especially at a time that we witness and the world witnesses more killing, more death, more carnage escalating around us, escalating around those directly involved in the Middle East.

It is especially essential to be a voice for peace when others believe that escalating the military option without serious and equal emphasis on political and diplomatic efforts will yield calm and resolution.