Iraq has an oil industry and a middle class. Afghanistan has neither.

Iraq was a mission carried out by America and Britain, nearly alone, with few allies helping. Afghanistan is home to a NATO mission where a very large majority of the troops come from outside America.

Finally, the insurgency in Iraq was sustained by dictatorships in Syria and Iran. In Afghanistan, the principal sustainment in income of the Taliban is now heroin, generating billions in profit.

Our troops have accomplished a great deal already in Afghanistan. We destroyed al Qaeda's training bases, and then deposed the Taliban dictatorship that protected them. We organized elections, and then protected a new democratically elected government under Hamid Karzai.

□ 1530

These missions were no small feat in a country that has proven to be the graveyard of the Soviet military and that has seen no elections for three generations.

Since 2006, the mission in Afghanistan has stalled as the Taliban has morphed into a new and deadly force. The tenets of Islam are generally anti-narcotic. The Taliban first eradicated poppy and heroin production, but now has changed its practice. Once the Taliban no longer had easy access to bin Laden or to Saudi charity money, they went into the heroin business big time. Today, they are more accurately described as the narco-Taliban, backed by at least $500 million in annual drug profits. Some of Afghanistan's wealthiest warlords are Taliban leaders who produce heroin to support jihad and terror against the elected Government of Afghanistan and of the nations of the West.

The narco-Taliban are not evenly distributed across Afghanistan. They are concentrated in the heroin heartland of the Helmand River valley and in the nearby city of Kandahar. There is a growing misperception that the war in Afghanistan is fiercest near Pakistan's border. While that may have been true last year, the key to fighting this year is along the heroin river of Helmand in southern Afghanistan. The Afghan Government and NATO are fighting pitched battles in the strategic rear of NATO where support and funding for the Taliban are actually the greatest.

Our effort there has been expensive both in blood and in treasure. In my area, the U.S. has lost over 80 soldiers, but the Canadians have lost over 90 and the British over 110. I cannot emphasize enough the dedication and professionalism and commitment of our troops and especially of our NATO allies.

I, personally, served with British Royal Marine Commandos, with Canadian troops, with Dutch armor officers and enlisted, with Danish armor officers and enlisted, and with Romanian infantry. Along with our service men and women from the Army, the Marines, the Air Force, and the Navy, I found these troops from the West to be young, idealistic and some of the most dedicated people I've ever served with. In short, I worked with heroes whom I admire a great deal.

When I deployed to Afghanistan, I thought I might serve as a Fobbit. A ''Fobbit'' is a person who works on a Forward Operating Base, or a FOB, who never leaves its border, who simply shuttles between the chow hall, the office, the gym, and the rack. Thanks to my command, I was not a Fobbit. I spent a great deal of my time outside the wire in Kandahar, in Geresk, in Lashkar Gah, and in Qalat. This experience gave me a much greater understanding of the opportunities that we share with NATO and with the Afghan Government.

With all of this effort, we should ask the question: What is at stake in Afghanistan? Should we pull out? Should we stay put or should we double down?

In my view, what is at stake is that the safety of American families is at risk especially if you live in the target cities of New York, Washington or Chicago. These are the cities most emphasized by al Qaeda and the Taliban. The dream of many Talib and foreign fighters is to depose the democratically elected government of Afghanistan and then move jihad back into the cities of Europe and the United States.

Most of the NATO troops whom I met remember not just 9/11, which they watched on TV, but also the Madrid Metro attack, the London bus bombings, and the murder of intellectuals in Amsterdam. They believe as I do, which is the best way to face the Talib is in Afghanistan with Afghan allies who know how to fight them best.

Should we keep the mission in Afghanistan as it is today?

If we do that, we risk a bloody stalemate that would definitely protect the capital of the Afghan Government in Kabul but would surrender much of the territory of the country to the Talib. The Talib is also wearing our allies thin, especially in Canada and in the Netherlands, and it would strain our alliance. The Taliban now attacks young girls, who dare to go to school, with acid in their faces, and it has assassinated Afghanistan's only female police officer because she was a woman. We know who they are. They are brutal dictators who want to set society back to the 13th century.

As Americans, we cannot go back to the 13th century. Our culture and our country don't even go back that far. Most Afghans support our values of reform, of rights for women, of the vote, and especially of modernity. But simply to protect their families, many in Afghanistan want to be with the winning side, and right now, many families in Afghanistan don't know who the winning side will be—the Afghan Government and NATO or the Taliban.

Should we double down?

NATO allies clearly believe that we should double down, but they are waiting for a call from our new President. Our best allies—the U.K., Spain, France, and several other NATO countries—are already planning to add their troop commitment to Afghanistan. Other close allies of the United States, especially Canada and the Netherlands, need to be asked before making the painful decision for themselves to hang in there. Most expect that the U.S. will be part of a 60,000 troop commitment to Afghanistan, one-third being Americans, who will then move to attack the heroin production heartland that sustains the Taliban. If this happens, we can expect some tough days ahead. Hard fighting and casualties would ensue. The Taliban cannot survive without the heroin income that comes from this region. If we succeed, we will rip the financial engine out from the Taliban, securing a future for central Asia that does not include terror.

In the end, we should ask this key question: What is our exit strategy?

Currently, the Afghan police and army are much, much smaller than their counterparts in Iraq, a country that has an equal number of people. We need to double the size of Afghanistan's police and army so that they can take this mission from NATO and so that we can wind up our own effort. It will take at least 2 or 3 years to accomplish this objective, which is why our NATO mission is needed now.

I want to thank the men and women with whom I served. Our Dutch allies sent us General de Kruif, and our British allies sent us Brigadier General Hook of the Royal Marine Commandos, both of whom I served with closely.

I also want to thank the men with whom I most closely worked: Majors Will Daniel and Fred Tanner of the U.S. Army. I also want to thank them for their dedication. I think about them here from the floor each and every day.

I especially want to thank my boss, Brigadier General John Nicholson, of the U.S. Army. I count myself lucky that, at this later stage in my life, I have served briefly with such an inspirational leader.

To the mothers and fathers of this country, I would say that, if your sons or daughters serve in southern Afghanistan, they will work under one of the most able military leaders whom I have ever met.

As we leave Iraq, it is likely that Afghanistan will no longer be the forgotten war. Members of this House should take note that our troops have already accomplished a great deal there, but more remains to be done.

For my part, I am honored to have served there, and I will be on this House floor the voice of the troops, of the Americans whom we have stationed in the land far above the Khyber Pass.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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 Ms. HIRONO) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SHERMAN, for 5 minutes, today.

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

Mr. WOLF, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. POE of Texas, for 5 minutes, January 15.

Mr. JONES, for 5 minutes, January 15.

Mr. GOHMERT, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Member (at his request) to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. BOOZMAN, for 5 minutes, today.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 40 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, January 9, 2009, at 9 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 fourth quarter of 2008, pursuant to Public Law 95–384 are as follows:

REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, DELEGATION TO BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, EXPENDED BETWEEN NOV. 24 AND NOV. 27, 2008

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]
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

[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.

REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, COMMITTEE ON RULES, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, EXPENDED BETWEEN OCT. 1 AND DEC. 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]
James McGovern	11/8	11/13	Ecuador		1,223.00		2,333.23				3,556.23
Cynthia Buhl	11/8	11/13	Ecuador		1,223.00		2,333.23				3,556.23
Committee total					2,446.00		4,666.46				7,112.46

[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.

LOUISE McINTOSH SLAUGHTER, Chairperson, Dec. 16, 2008.

REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, DELEGATION TO BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, EXPENDED BETWEEN NOV. 24 AND NOV. 27, 2008

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]
Robert F. Reeves	11/24	11/27	Belgium		514.07		7011.62		215.00		7740.69
Teri Morgan	11/24	11/27	Belgium		514.07		7011.62		215.00		7740.69
Kyle Anderson	11/24	11/27	Belgium		514.07		7011.62		215.00		7740.69
Karina Newton	11/24	11/27	Belgium		514.07		7011.62		215.00		7740.69
Catherine Cooke	11/24	11/30	Belgium		514.07		7011.62		215.00		7740.69
Jeff Gold	11/24	11/27	Belgium		514.07		7011.62		215.00		7740.69
Kirsten Gullickson	11/24	11/30	Belgium		514.07		7011.62		215.00		7740.69
John Clocker	11/24	11/30	Belgium		514.07		7011.62		215.00		7740.69
Committee total					4,112.56		56,092.96		1,720.00		61,925.52

[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.

ROBERT F. REEVES, Dec. 17, 2008.

REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY FALL MEETING IN VALENCIA, SPAIN AND BILATERAL MEETINGS IN FLORENCE AND ROME, ITALY, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, EXPENDED BETWEEN NOV. 10 AND NOV. 19, 2008.

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. John Tanner	11/10	11/14	Italy		3,746.68		(3)				11,728.80
	11/14	11/19	Spain		1,922.77		6,059.35				
Hon. Melissa Bean	11/10	11/14	Italy		3,746.68		(3)				5,252.86
	11/14	11/18	Spain		1,506.18		(3)				
Hon. John Boozman	11/10	11/14	Italy		3,746.68		(3)				5,252.86
	11/14	11/18	Spain		1,506.18		(3)				
Hon. Jo Ann Emerson	11/10	11/14	Italy		3,746.68		(3)				5,252.86
	11/14	11/18	Spain		1,506.18		(3)				
Hon. Baron Hill	11/10	11/14	Italy		3,746.68		(3)				5,252.86
	11/14	11/19	Spain		1,506.18		(3)				
Hon. Carolyn McCarthy	11/10	11/14	Italy		3,746.68		(3)				5,252.86
	11/14	11/19	Spain		1,506.18		(3)				
Hon. Kendrick Meek	11/10	11/14	Italy		3,746.68		(3)				5,252.86
	11/14	11/19	Spain		1,506.18		(3)				
Hon. Charlie Melancon	11/10	11/14	Italy		3,746.68		(3)				5,252.86
	11/14	11/18	Spain		1,506.18		(3)				
Hon. Jeff Miller	11/10	11/14	Italy		3,746.68		(3)				5,252.86
	11/14	11/18	Spain		1,506.18		(3)				
Hon. Dennis Moore	11/10	11/14	Italy		3,746.68		(3)				5,252.86
	11/14	11/18	Spain		1,506.18		(3)				