HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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We Cannot Afford Another $87 Billion in Iraq Mr. Speaker, the neo-conservative media machine has been hard at work lately drumming up support for the $87 billion appropriation to extend our precarious occupation of Iraq. Opposition to this funding, according to the Secretary of Defense, encourages our enemies and hinders the war against terrorism. This is a distortion of the facts and is nothing more than attacking the messenger when one disapproves of the message.

Those within the administration, prior to the war, who warned of the dangers and real costs were fired. Yet now it turns out that they were correct, that it would not be a cakewalk, that it would require a lot more troops, and costs would far exceed original expectations.

The President recently reminded us that we went into Iraq to force its compliance with U.N. resolutions, since the U.N. itself was not up to the task. It was not for national security reasons. Yet we all know that the U.N. never endorsed this occupation.

The question we in the Congress ought to ask is this: What if our efforts to westernize and democratize Iraq do not work? Who knows? Many believe that our pursuit of nation building in Iraq will actually make things worse in Iraq, in the entire Middle East, throughout the entire Muslim world, and even here in the United States.

This is a risky venture, and new funding represents an escalation of our efforts to defend a policy that has little chance of working.

Since no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq, nor any evidence that the army of Saddam Hussein could have threatened the security of any nation, let alone the United States, a new reason is now given to justify an endless entanglement in a remote area of the world 6,000 miles from our homeland.

We are now told that we must occupy Iraq to fight the terrorists that attacked us on 9/11. Yet not one shred of evidence has been produced to show that the Iraqi government had anything to do with 9/11 or any affiliation with al-Qaeda.

The American people are first told they have to sacrifice to pay for the bombing of Iraq. Now they must accept the fact that they must pay to rebuild it. If they complain, they will be accused of being unpatriotic and not supporting the troops. I wonder what a secret poll of our troops would reveal about whether they thought public support for bringing them home next week indicated a lack of support for their well-being.

Some believe that by not raising taxes to pay for the war we can fund it on the cheap. We cannot. When deficits skyrocket the federal government prints more money, the people are effectively taxed by losing value in their savings and in their paychecks. The inflation tax is a sinister and evil way to pay for unpopular wars. It has been done that way for centuries.

Mr. Speaker, I guess we shouldn't worry because we can find a way to pay for it. Already we are charging our wounded soldiers $8.10 a day for food when recuperating in a hospital from their war injuries. We also know that other soldiers are helping out by buying their own night vision goggles, GPS devices, short wave radios, backpacks, and even shoes! So I suppose we can fund the war that way. It does not seem like much of a bother to cut veterans' benefits. Besides, many conservatives for years have argued that deficits do not really matter, only tax rates do. So let us just quit worrying about deficits and this $87 billion supplemental. Of course I'm being sarcastic.

Seriously, though, funding for this misadventure should be denied no matter how well-meaning its supporters are. To expect a better world to come from force of arms abroad and confiscatory taxation at home is nothing but a grand illusion. The sooner we face the reality, the better.

While we nation-build in Iraq in the name of defeating terrorism, we ignore our responsibilities to protect our borders at home while we compromise the liberties of our citizens with legislation like the Patriot Act.

There are two main reasons we need to reject the foreign policy of the past 50 years that has been used to rationalize our presence in Iraq. First, the practical: We cannot expect to force western, U.S.-style democracy on a nation that for over 1,000 years learned to live with and accept an Islamic-based legal system. No matter what we say or believe, to the Iraqis they have been invaded by the Christian west, and whether it is the United States, U.N. or European troops that are sent to teach them the ways of the west it will not matter.

Second, we have no constitutional authority to police the world or involve ourselves in nation building, in making the world safe for our style of democracy. Our founders advised against it and the early presidents followed that advice. If we believe strongly in our ideals, the best way to spread them is to set a good example so that others will voluntarily emulate us. Force will not work. Besides, we do not have the money. The $87 billion appropriations request should be rejected.