

our troops from Afghanistan, and we need it because the reality is that there is no military solution to Afghanistan. In fact, the occupation of Afghanistan is making us less safe. Our occupation is a prime recruiting tool for the insurgency and for al Qaeda.

If we remember, nearly 9 years ago the reason the authorization was granted, which I could not support, was to provide authorization to go after al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. Well, nearly a decade later, what are we doing there? We need to redefine this mission. We need to begin the safe, timely withdrawal of U.S. troops and military contractors, and we should do so by adopting this amendment today which stops this funding.

A few months from now, the war from Afghanistan will enter, as I said, its tenth year. It is already the longest war in our Nation's history, longer than Vietnam and the Civil War, and there is really no end in sight. In fact, this concern of "war without end" again is why I opposed the resolution authorizing military force on September 14, 2001. It was a blank check then, and it remains a blank check now.

I think it is important to take a moment and put the evolution of this war in context, because we have to remember that, again, there was no discussion about the potential consequences of invading Afghanistan. The debate we are having today should have happened 10 years ago.

Few people imagined that we would have nearly 100,000 troops there a decade later, despite the fact that the CIA estimates that there may be only 50 to 100 al Qaeda in Afghanistan. So we have to be honest; the war is not working. The Afghan government is plagued by incompetence and corruption, The Afghan Security Forces are in shambles, and, tragically, just over 1,000 servicemen and -women have lost their lives.

It is clear that our servicemen and -women have performed with incredible courage and commitment. They have done everything we have asked them to do. As the daughter of a 25-year military officer, my dad was a lieutenant colonel in the Army, I understand and know the sacrifices these families are making. But the truth is, they have been put in an impossible situation. The Afghan government is anything but a reliable partner, and conditions on the ground make winning over the Afghan people extremely difficult, if not nearly an impossible task.

Sadly, this war has no end in sight. We are bound to see the generals come back to us and ask us for more money, more time, and more troops if they say it is going well. If it is not going well, I expect to see the generals come back and ask for more money, more time, and more troops.

So regardless of the situation, unless Congress does something, and we have to face this, if Congress allows this, it will be an endless war. So enough is

enough. The U.S. has no choice but to pursue and support a political and diplomatic solution in Afghanistan. We must be about that hard work now.

So please join me in supporting the safe and orderly withdrawal of our troops. We can and we must responsibly bring them home and end this war now.

I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. LEWIS of California. I rise to oppose the Lee amendment to essentially cut off the funding for our troops in Afghanistan.

I am very proud to yield 5 minutes to my colleague, our leader on the Defense Subcommittee, the gentleman from Florida, BILL YOUNG.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding the time.

I rise to give compliments to Chairman NORM DICKS of the subcommittee for having worked with the minority and the majority, as well as the President of the United States, to develop a very good Defense appropriations supplemental appropriations bill for our troops who are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The bill provides the equipment necessary for those troops to carry out their mission. The bill provides for training. The bill provides for self-protective measures to keep our troops safe while they fight the war they were sent to fight.

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The only problem I have is we're not going to vote on that bill. Although this is supposedly a defense supplemental, that bill is not going to be voted on. That bill was reported and approved by the subcommittee back in May, but yet there has been no consideration beyond that date. The subcommittee approved it back in May after the President requested it.

The members of the Appropriations Committee have not had an opportunity to vote on a Defense supplemental appropriations bill. The Members of the House have not had an opportunity to vote on a Defense appropriations supplemental bill. There's something wrong with that.

Chairman DICKS did a good job. He worked with us, as did Chairman Murtha before him, and it was a good bipartisan effort. We're not only not going to vote on that good bill, but we're not even going to have a chance to vote on the Senate version of the bill that's not quite as good as the House version, but it's better than nothing. And it's time that we provide the funding for our troops in the field, deployed and exposed to danger, so that they're provided with what they need.

I have a problem with this. I said the subcommittee approved the bill back in May. The full committee has not considered it. As a matter of fact, we

are rapidly approaching the 1-year anniversary of the last time the Appropriations Committee met to consider an appropriations bill. Now, that's unusual. It seems to me like it flies in the face of the Constitution, because Article I, section 9 makes it very clear that the executive branch of government cannot spend money from the General Treasury that has not first been appropriated by Congress. And if the Appropriations Committee doesn't meet to approve the bills or to report the bills to the House, how are we going to meet that constitutional responsibility? It's pretty tough.

July 22 last year was the last time the Appropriations Committee met to consider an appropriations bill. So I compliment Chairman DICKS for creating a good bipartisan product that the President of the United States supported, and I am just disappointed that we're not going to have a chance to vote on it. Our troops in the field need to know that we are supporting them with whatever it is that they need to carry out their mission.

I am opposed to all of these amendments that we are considering because none of them do anything to support our troops in the field, which is what this bill is supposed to be all about. These amendments are not good, and it's just a real shame that we are not considering the needs of our troops who are deployed, to provide what it is that they need in order to accomplish the mission that we sent them to accomplish and to protect themselves while they're doing it.

Mr. Speaker, typically, I would use my time talking on a Supplemental as the Ranking Member of the Defense Subcommittee to congratulate Chairman DICKS on a fine bi-partisan package that he and his staff put together. I would thank him for treating us fairly and listening to the minority's concerns, and suggest that we pass the bill as quickly as possible.

Regrettably, I cannot do that today because the bill before us is the product of such an abuse of power and process that we aren't even voting on Chairman DICKS' bill.

Instead, we find ourselves voting on the Senate defense supplemental in the hope of getting the Department of Defense the desperately needed funds for on-going Afghanistan operations before they run out.

And I must say that really upsets me. While this is our best chance of getting badly needed funds to the Department, Chairman DICKS and his staff had produced a very fine, truly bipartisan supplemental bill . . . one that in my opinion was much better than this Senate bill.

But because of his leadership, that bill never saw the light of day. Not because it was controversial, or contained something bad, but because procedurally a small group of Members couldn't find a way to get unrelated, extraneous domestic spending items attached to it.

So instead today, maybe it is in my best interest for me to use this time making a case for my old spot on the Armed Services Committee.

That may seem odd, but I can only wonder how much longer the Appropriations Committee will exist . . . if it still does.

I do thank Mr. DICKS for his courtesy and cooperation. I only regret that his leadership decided to play politics with what was a good bill which supported our troops.