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WASHINGTON – **Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01)** issued the following statement today on the official end of the war in Iraq.

“For nearly a decade our brave men and women in uniform have served with honor in Iraq, putting their lives on the line every day. Ever since the initial invasion our warriors have worked tirelessly to stabilize the country, root out elements of terrorism and create an opportunity for Democracy to take hold. Today we proudly join together as a nation in saying to those that have returned and the thousands preparing to leave, ‘Thank you and Welcome Home!’

“While we recognize the bravery and heroism of our servicemen and women, it's also important for us to take a moment to acknowledge the sacrifices made by the families of these soldiers, as well as pause to remember the 4,484 service members who have not returned. Those men and women made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation and we must never forget.

“Here in the First Congressional District we lost seven of our finest in Iraq: Captain Eric Paliwoda, Lance Corporal Larry Philippon and Captain Brian Lentendre of West Hartford, Sergeant Felix DelGrecco of Hartford, Sergeant David Coullard of Glastonbury, Sergeant Richard Ford of East Hartford and Sergeant Edward Kramer of Southington. As always, our thoughts and prayers are with their families.

“I want to also thank President Obama for staying true to his word and bringing this war to a close. For too long, our nation was engaged in a conflict of our own creation. History will be the judge of this conflict, but ultimately I believe the doctrine of preemption and unilateralism cost this nation dearly.

“Whatever the judgment of history, there can be no doubt that our brave men and women in uniform served our nation well. And thanks to the exceptional service of so many veterans of Iraq and Desert Storm, the nation, no matter how it felt about the war, was always able to distinguish between the war and the warriors.

“Thank you all. A grateful nation is happy to have you home and we will never forget your commitment and service.”

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