Mr. Speaker, thousands of Americans have lost their

lives and billions of U.S. dollars have

been spent in the war in Iraq. This war

has dangerously overstretched our

military and preoccupied our country

for almost 3 years now, and it still has no end in sight.

And after all this, what a tragedy and

disaster it will be if the real winner in

this war is not the Iraqi people nor a

more secure and democratic Middle

East but rather Iran, a country that

supports terrorism and opposes most of

what we stand for. Yet today this possible scenario is exactly what we face.

Iran has used our preoccupation in

Iraq to its advantage. While we have

searched for nonexistent weapons of

mass destruction in Iraq, Iran has pursued its own nuclear ambitions. Now,

with its decision to resume uranium

enrichment, Iran is dangerously closer

to having the capability to produce nuclear weapons. And press reports today

link Iran’s supposedly peaceful nuclear

program to its military work on high

explosives and missiles.

At the same time, Iran has deeply insinuated itself in Iraq. It has taken advantage of Iraq’s porous borders and is

supporting anti-American efforts there.

Its goal is to promote a Shiite-dominated anti-American state that can

strengthen Iran’s military, economic

and political power in the region.

But even before its latest nuclear

pursuits and involvement in Iraq,

Iran’s actions have been seriously troubling. It has pursued dangerous chemical, biological, and ballistic missile

capabilities; supported terrorists; and

undermined the Middle East peace process.

Amidst all of this, Iran’s leaders have

escalated their anti-Semitic rhetoric,

threatening to wipe Israel off the map.

Yet, rather than handle Iran’s nuclear situation and involvement in Iraq

early and decisively with a sophisticated policy that also addresses the

broader problems posed by the country,

this administration largely relied on

the Europeans to sort this thing out.

As a result, the nuclear situation is

now an international crisis, and we

risk having a radical anti-American regime armed with nuclear weapons entrenched as the dominant power in the

Middle East.

We simply cannot let this happen.

Iran must not acquire a nuclear weapon. It must respect Iraq’s sovereignty,

and it must become a constructive

member of the international community. While cooperation with our allies

and strategic partners is critical, the

U.S. must take the lead here. The

agreement brokered by Secretary Rice

this week to report Iran to the U.N. Security Council is encouraging, but action by the council is uncertain and

may not resolve the nuclear crisis or

much else. The administration must

put forth the necessary plan, and Congress must do its part. Today, the

House Armed Services Committee held

a hearing on this matter and will do more.

There are no simple answers or easy

solutions, but one thing is clear: the

administration, with Congress, must be

more engaged and must get this right.

Other countries will be closely watching this situation, and there are serious implications for the security of our

Nation, stability in the Middle East

and the nonproliferation regime.

We must address the immediate nu-

clear crisis, but we must also account

for the complexity of the situation and

broader, long-term issues involved; and

we must consider all tools at our disposal. Yet there are limits to what we

can accomplish militarily, and sweeping sanctions could cause more harm

than good. Still, there are many tools

available that this administration has,

unfortunately, failed to utilize effectively or at all.

Here are some of them: we should actively support the IAEA’s efforts. We

should pursue more focused and vigorous diplomacy and encourage China,

Russia, and India to play key roles. We

should develop necessary human intelligence capabilities.

We should cultivate U.S. support

among the Iranian population and substantially increase democracy

promotion efforts that encourage the population to demand more moderate leadership. Specifically, we should increase

communication through TV, radio, and

the Internet. We should convey a coordinated U.S. policy. We should widely disseminate information about the

regime’s repression and corruption. We

should provide effective assistance to

Iranian dissidents and pro-democracy

NGOs here in the United States.

We should increase cultural, academic, and professional opportunities

for Iran’s youth and women. Additionally, we should consider

‘‘smart sanctions,’’ as well as incentives that would

target Iran’s leadership, avoid harming

the Iranian population and have strong

international support. For example, we

should sanction overseas assets of corrupt leaders.

Also, we should encourage Lebanon

to disarm Hezbollah, which Iran uses to

reject power. We should limit Iran’s

ability to disrupt oil and gas supplies

and increase energy prices. This includes reducing the vulnerability of

Middle Eastern energy resources to Iranian-backed terrorist attacks and decreasing U.S. reliance on such resources.

We simply cannot allow Iran to

emerge as the real winner in the war in

Iraq. This must be a top bipartisan priority.