Mr. Speaker, the

drum beats of war are growing louder.

There is a growing fear here and

around the world that the President,

either alone or by proxy, will order a

military strike against Iran.

The President has escalated the military

presence in Iraq at the same time

he has escalated the military rhetoric

concerning Iran. The President’s accusations

against Iran are being planted

like seeds in fertile ground. Is this how

the President cultivates diplomacy, or

is he sowing the seeds for another war?

The House must pass legislation that

would require a debate and a vote before

the President orders U.S. Forces

to launch a military strike against

Iran. This is the people’s House, and

the American people have spoken.

They don’t trust the President, and

they are worried about his saber rattling

toward Iran.

I think of it this way: If Iraq is a

quagmire, and it is, then Iran will be

quicksand, with America sinking deeper

and deeper into a disastrous foreign

policy grounded in brute force and producing

brutal consequences: thousands

of American soldiers dead, tens of

thousands of American soldiers gravely

wounded, billions of dollars borrowed

and wasted, over 100,000 Iraqi civilians

killed and injured, a raging civil war.

And after all that, the President and

the Vice President say a military option

is on the table for Iran. To prove

it, U.S. warships were ordered into the

Gulf 2 weeks ago. It was a show of military

might around the date that the

Russian military intelligence sources

have widely forecast that the U.S.

would strike Iran in stories posted online

and in newspapers.

The current political regime in Iran

is a government I do not endorse or

support, but the record must show that

the President’s policies in Iraq created

the problem the President now warns

he will fix by military action, if necessary.

After the overthrow of Saddam Hussein,

the President installed Paul

Bremer as America’s de facto premier

of Iraq. Mr. Bremer answered only to

the White House and not to the Iraqi

people. Bremer dictated a series of

policies that dismantled Iraq from the

inside out. With the White House calling

his every move, Bremer first dismantled

the Iraqi civil society, plunging

an entire nation into chaos. The

Iraqi civilians who ran everything from

sewage treatment plants to traffic control

to keeping the lights on were summarily

fired. The country’s infrastructure

remains crippled by Bremer’s

order 4 years later. Bremer also dismissed

Iraq’s military, and in so doing,

he put tens of thousands of demoralized

Iraqis on the streets with a gun and a

grudge. The vast majority of these people

were in the military for the pay and

the job, not because they supported

Saddam.

With Iraqi civil and military sectors

wiped out over 4 years ago, there were

no Iraqis left to guard the borders between

Iraq and Syria and Iraq and Iran.

The borders have been wide open ever

since because the appointed proxy government

didn’t bother to understand

the history of the region or a basic national

security need to protect a nation’s

borders.

We know weapons and insurgents

have been walking across Iraq’s open

borders. Almost a year ago, leaders

told me in Amman, and these are Iraqi

leaders, that the most constructive

thing the U.S. could do would be to

withdraw from the cities and redeploy

to the borders and establish border

guards.

Instead of doing something constructive,

the President ordered a military

escalation in Iraq that is destructive.

The Iraqi people want us out of Iraq.

The American people want us out of

Iraq. But the President drives us deeper

and deeper into Iraq and then

threatens military action against Iran.

As a lame duck President and as

slave to his own failed foreign policy,

Congress must ensure that the President

cannot unilaterally strike Iran in

the remaining months of his failed

presidency. Congress must pass legislation

that preserves the checks and balances

to guarantee that the President

must listen to someone other than the

Vice President.

America cannot afford to remain on a

hair trigger until a new President

takes the oath of office in January

2009, but that is exactly what will happen

unless Congress steps up to ensure

that the President stands down on a

military strike against Iran. We must

take away his blank check.