Madam Speaker, you will recall that the hallmark of the

President's so-called surge, the escalation of troops into Iraq, was

that Iraqi forces would actually be on the front lines, while American

troops would be providing support.

In fact, a White House fact sheet from the day the President

announced escalation, says that the primary element of the strategy is

to let the Iraqis lead.

Well, the escalation has begun, and not only are they not leading, we

are lucky if they even show up. That is right. Reportedly, as many as

50 percent of the Iraqi troops expected and needed for the Baghdad

operation aren't reporting to duty. This doesn't bode well, Madam

Speaker. American troops will now bear the brunt of what promises to be

deadly, violent, urban warfare.

We are now finding out that the escalation will be twice as large as

the President has said, requiring 48,000 additional troops, as opposed

to 21,000, as originally announced by the President. Now, if Iraqis

aren't prepared for the fight, it is easy to imagine still more U.S.

soldiers being sent into the grinder. The surge has barely begun, and

already, it is failing.

It is clear, furthermore, that the Maliki government is powerless to

live up to its promises. Maliki himself owes much of his political

authority to one of Iraq's most powerful militia leaders. So how,

exactly, is he going to keep Iraqi communities safe from the militias?

On their way out the door, General Abizaid and General Casey warned

that increasing force levels just absolves Iraqis of the responsibility

for their own security, and they were absolutely right.

In the State of the Union address, the President said, and I quote

him,

If they don't, where is the ``or else'' in the President's words, and

where are the consequences if they don't meet these benchmarks and

honor these commitments?

Madam Speaker, it is time for fewer carrots and more sticks. Edward

Luttwak of the Center for Strategic and International Studies put it

succinctly. He said,

Or, in the words of Luttwak's New York Times op-ed piece

yesterday, he said,

There is only one solution, a quick military withdrawal from Iraq. I

have a bill that was sponsored by 33 other Members of Congress that

will do precisely that. H.R. 508, the Bring Our Troops Home and Iraq

Sovereignty Restoration Act will do exactly what we need. It will take

our troops out of harm's way and force Iraqis to secure their own

country. We won't leave them high and dry. The bill calls for an

international stabilization force, but one that would come only at the

request of the Iraqi government for no more than 2 years, and with

other nations taking on the burden as well.

H.R. 508 will have our troops home in 6 months, leaving behind no

permanent military bases and turning over control of the Iraqi oil to

the Iraqi people. We will not abandon Iraq. We will continue to be a

partner in the reconciliation and reconstruction, but it is time for us

to end the military occupation that has failed so tragically. There are

no good answers here, but one thing is for sure: There is nothing more

our soldiers can do to bring peace to the streets of Baghdad or any

other part of Iraq. If anything, our continued presence is aggravating

an already combustible situation, which, in fact, we created. We

created this situation with our invasion in the first place. Madam

Speaker, it is time for Iraqis to defend Iraq, and it is time for

American troops to come home.