Mr. Speaker, some of the most frightening violence in

months has erupted in Iraq over the past week. In fact, today was

reported to be the worst day of death and violence since the United

States started the war 3\1/2\ years ago.

On Saturday, Sunni insurgents bombed and destroyed a Shiite mosque.

In response, Shiite gunmen dragged random motorists out of their cars

in a Sunni Baghdad neighborhood, killing them, killing them with

impunity.

The situation has become absolutely terrifying. And, sadly, the cycle

of retaliation and revenge is getting worse, not better. Those who

think Iraq has not already devolved into a civil war are just kidding

themselves. They must think a civil war looks something like two

pitched armies battling it out across from each other with muskets and

cannons in a giant field.

Unfortunately, today's version of a civil war is a lot more murky. It

involves fighting on the streets, not a battlefield. It involves

innocent civilians, men, women, it involves children, who are losing

their lives, who are living in a great deal of pain and a great deal of

uncertainty.

Mr. Speaker, what we can be sure about is that our presence in Iraq

is not helping the situation. In fact, the presence of nearly 150,000

American troops in Iraq has become a rallying point for dissatisfied

people in the Arab world. This latest surge of violence has coincided

with an announcement by U.S. military officials that four more soldiers

have been arrested in connection with the rape and murder of a young

Iraqi woman and three members of her family.

To be sure, the vast majority of all American soldiers currently

stationed in Iraq are bravely and honorably serving their country, but

the destructive actions of a few very bad apples have added fuel to the

fire, and the Iraqi people want us to leave their country.

The sad truth is that our troops have been failed by their civilian

leaders in Washington. They have been misguided. They have gone on a

mission that has been fraught with failure from the very, very

beginning. The White House is more interested, it appears, in trying to

make Iraq seem like a success than actually fixing the problem that

plagues the country.

If you go to the White House Web site and if you search for ``Iraq,''

you will find a section called ``Renewal in Iraq.'' This page contains

such platitudes as, and I quote the Web site,

; and another one,

The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that words like

or

are no more than tired old slogans. Most Americans and

nearly all Iraqis understand that an open-ended U.S. military presence

in Iraq doesn't serve anyone's interests. The very perception that we

plan to stay in Iraq permanently is one of the greatest catalysts

spurring the Iraqi insurgency.

It is clear that the time is long overdue to bring our troops home.

It is time to end the bloodshed and to send a clear message that the

United States has no plans to stay in Iraq indefinitely, that we won't

occupy permanent bases in Iraq and we won't control Iraqi oil, and that

our troops will be coming home. They will be leaving Iraq. They will be

coming home to their families.

The American people know this and they want their elected leaders in

Congress and the White House to catch up with them.