Madam Speaker, finally, grudgingly, the administration

has agreed to talk to Syria and Iran about the civil war that is raging

in Iraq. This should have happened at least 2 years ago, so why now?

Has the President finally concluded what many of us have said for a

long time: That you cannot shoot your way to a peace in Iraq? That

would be a hopeful sign, but it is doubtful since he continues to

escalate the U.S. presence in the middle of a civil war.

The apparent movement towards diplomacy comes at a curious time. The

American people told their government last November to get their

soldiers out of harm's way when they gave the Democrats a 2-year

contract on the majority. And it didn't take long for this House to

make a down payment on rebuilding trust with the American people.

Despite repeated Presidential claims that meant nothing, the

overwhelming passage of Speaker Pelosi's first step in getting U.S.

soldiers out of harm's way was the shot heard round the world.

No one wants to move faster than me in getting the soldiers out of

Iraq. But every journey starts with a single step, and we have done it.

The American people and other nations welcomed the Speaker's

leadership in getting this country to begin to set a new course in Iraq

based on a reality, and not based on the same old rhetoric from the

White House. They continue to bluster; so what else is new?

There are serious mainstream Middle East leaders who believe the U.S.

policy has more to do with extraction than engagement. By extraction,

they don't mean U.S. soldiers being extracted out of harm's way, they

are referring to extracting Iraq's oil.

The Asia Times yesterday published two commentaries that are

reverberating throughout the Middle East. One is called, ``U.S.'s Iraq

Oil Grab is a Done Deal.'' And the other is entitled: ``Big Oil In,

Stability Out Under New Iraqi Law.'' I will include the two articles

for the Record.

As many articles in recent days have pointed out, the President's

representatives in Iraq used intense pressure behind the scenes to get

the Iraq government to take the first step in making production-sharing

agreements, PSAs, the law of Iraq. There are scenarios in which

investment and production will be a benefit to the Iraq people, but the

Iraq people have to be solely in charge. As it stands, and as many

fear, the

PSA language approved over the weekend could indenture Iraq's oil

wealth to U.S. oil interests for decades to come.

As passed by the Iraq parliament, a new centralized government agency

in Iraq, closely tied to the U.S., would have ultimate control over who

gets access to Iraq's vast oil resources.

The oil industry itself says it costs one single dollar to extract a

barrel of oil in Iraq, but that barrel brings $60 today on the world

market. How does big oil, closely aligned to the President and Vice

President, spell conservation? It is spelled I-R-A-Q.

Here is the U.S.-Iraq equation as seen by people from the Middle

East: Billions of barrels of oil, billions of dollars in profits,

dozens of U.S. military bases across Iraq, and thousands of U.S.

soldiers remaining in Iraq.

The bottom line is this: Is the President hoping Iraq will import

democracy, or will it export oil under the thumb of U.S. oil interests?

The production-sharing agreements have not yet been enacted into law.

The outcome is still uncertain. But one thing is certain, production-

sharing agreements that favor the U.S. means the U.S. will be in Iraq

for decades. The President has expressed a new found interest in

diplomacy.

Are we going to negotiate with Iran at the same time we push for PSA

agreements to become law? A lot of people in the Middle East wonder.

The U.S. needs to state its intentions if there is any hope for a

diplomatic solution in Iraq.

We not only need to extract U.S. soldiers from Iraq, we also need to

extract U.S. oil interests from dictating the oil future for the Iraqi

people. The deeper the U.S. goes in influencing the distribution of

Iraq oil wealth, the more we inflame the tensions and suspicions about

why we invaded Iraq in the first place.

Remember weapons of mass destruction and Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda

and democracy? Now it becomes clear what it is really all about:

Getting control of Iraq oil.

Madam Speaker, we have got to have the President come clean. Perhaps

he will do a White House speech on this.