Mr. Speaker, yesterday I began to circulate a plan

among Members of Congress to establish a path towards the United States

exiting Iraq.

As we know, the administration is prepared to escalate the conflict.

They intend to increase troop levels to an unprecedented number without

establishing an ending date.

It is important for Congress to oppose the troop surge, but that is

not enough. We must respond powerfully to take steps to end the

occupation, close U.S. bases in Iraq and bring our troops home. These

steps are necessary preconditions to the U.S. extricating itself from

Iraq through the establishment of an international security and

peacekeeping force.

Congress, as a coequal branch of government, has a responsibility

here. Congress, under Article I, Section 8 of the United States

Constitution, has the war-making power. Congress appropriates funds for

the war. Congress does not dispense with its obligation to the American

people simply by opposing a troop surge in Iraq.

It is simply not credible to maintain that one opposes the war and

yet continues to fund it. And this contradiction runs as a deep fault

line through our politics, undermining public trust in the political

process and in those elected to represent the people.

If you oppose the war, then don't vote to fund it. If you have money

which can be used to bring the troops home or to prosecute the war, do

not say you want to bring the troops home while appropriating money to

keep them fighting a war in Iraq that cannot be won militarily.

That is why the administration should be notified now that Congress

will not approve of the appropriations request of up to $160 billion in

the spring for the purposes of continuing the occupation and the war.

Continuing to fund the war is not a plan. It would represent a

continuation of a disaster.

In addition to halting funding of the war, a parallel process is

needed, and I have offered such a comprehensive plan to this Congress.

And I am asking Members of Congress for their thoughtful consideration.

I would like to review some of the aspects of that plan. First and

foremost, the United States must announce that it will end the

occupation, close military bases and withdraw. The insurgency has been

fueled by the occupation and the prospect of long-term presence as

indicated by the building of permanent bases. A U.S. declaration of an

intent to withdraw the troops and close bases will dampen the

insurgency which has been inspired to resist colonization and fight

invaders and those who help support U.S. policy.

Furthermore, this will provide an opening where parties within Iraq

and in the region can set the stage for negotiations towards peaceful

settlement.

Now, it is urgent that Congress take a stand now to take a new

direction. The President last night articulated a plan for more war. He

will have our troops fighting door to door with greater intensity. We

will be in Iraq longer.

But there is another thing the President did, and this is another

reason why it is urgent for us to act. This President, and I want

everyone here to listen very carefully to this: This President is

setting the stage for a war against Iran. We all know this. It is not a

secret. He is talking about moving an aircraft carrier into the region,

giving Patriot missiles to our allies in the region. He has rattled the

saber with respect to Iran. He doesn't want to talk to their

government; doesn't want to deal with Syria.

This President has only one talent, and that is the talent to make

war and an illegal war at that, I might add.

Congress has to assume its power again to defend the American people,

to defend the international community.

This administration is on the rampage. That the President, at the

delicate condition of things in Iraq, would rattle the saber against

Iran shows you the extent to which the administration has no intention

of working to achieve peace. That is why Congress has to push now for

the administration to end the occupation, close military bases and

withdraw.

We have to announce that we are going to use the existing funds to

bring the troops home and bring the equipment home. We have to order a

simultaneous return of all U.S. contractors to the United States and

turn over all contracting work to the Iraqi Government.

When we do that, when we take those steps, then the world community

can be inspired that there is a new America that they will cooperate

with. But until we do that, we are on our own, and our troops are on

our own, caught in the middle of a civil war.

I will continue this in the next hour with Congresswoman Waters.