Mr. Speaker, we did not need to invade

Iraq. From the beginning, I found President Bush's stated reasons for

the Iraq war unconvincing. Now we know they were also untrue.

At the time the decision was being sold to Congress, I was unable to

get any level of assurance that there was a workable plan for victory.

There weren't answers to questions like, ``What is the strategy for

stabilization after the military victory?'' or, ``What is the exit

plan?''

The American forces were to be greeted by grateful Iraqis bearing

flowers, but I was never able to learn what plan B was if this rosy

scenario did not prove out. Now we know there was no plan B.

I voted against the war in Iraq, but even though I opposed the

invasion, I never dreamed that the President's policies and course of

action would be as disastrous as they have been for Iraq, for the Gulf

region and for America.

I think the real question America now faces is what is the least

catastrophic end to this debacle, and how can we obtain it. Answering

such a question would include options of utilizing diplomacy in the

region as recommended by the bipartisan Iraq Study Group. It would

include America calling upon neighboring States to take strong measures

to avoid a spread of the conflict beyond Iraq as that nation

disintegrates into tribal and sectarian violence. The Saudis are aware

of the peril and Iran is aware of the prospects.

But President Bush has once again offered a proposal based on wishful

thinking instead of the unpleasant reality. Having been the cause of

the destabilization of Iraq, America has a moral obligation to take

what steps are possible to obtain new stability. But wanting to create

stability within Iraq and being able to accomplish that goal with U.S.

military forces is not the same thing. That is why I have decided to

cosponsor Representative John Murtha's resolution directing the

redeployment of our troops at the earliest practicable date while

maintaining a quick reaction U.S. force and an over-the-horizon

presence of U.S. Marines in the region. Like Representative Murtha, I

feel like the solution to the war in Iraq is a diplomatic one.

America is a country that doesn't take disappointment well. Our

culture is one where the phrase ``failure is not an option'' just makes

sense. That attitude has served us well historically in science,

industry and war. But it can also lead to problems and to decisions

based on wishful thinking instead of on facts.

Political leaders don't want to be the ones to bring the bad news to

an American public raised on the phrase ``failure is not an option.''

Some even suspect that the President's escalation plan may have as a

goal running out the clock so the next President will be the one who

has to deliver the bad news.

Right now I think another American phrase is better for this

situation: When you are in the hole, the first thing to do is stop

digging.

It is time to stop digging. Sending in more troops is not going to

bring stability to Iraq because the primary problem between the Iraqis

is political, not military.

We are not going to be met with flowers by the Iraqis today, or

probably ever. More than 60 percent of the Iraqi public believes it is

a good thing to attack and kill Americans stationed in Iraq. We have to

accept that we are part of the problem in Iraq, not part of the

solution.

Real leadership deals with the world as it is, not as we wish it to

be. And there is something to keep in mind: The American public already knows it

is time to stop digging. Now they are ready to hear Congress say it out

loud.