Mr. Speaker, this week we finally got an objective analysis

of the situation in Iraq. We shouldn't be surprised that it differs

significantly from the status report from the White House last month,

which painted a much rosier political and security scenario in Iraq.

Nor should we be surprised if its conclusions are different from a

final report that is scheduled to come from the President this week.

The GAO findings are not a surprise. When President Bush began this

troop escalation plan, he promised this Congress that the Iraqis must

meet these benchmarks, and, if they did not, they would lose the

support of the American people.

Many of us who opposed the troop escalation plan were skeptical the

Iraqis would be able to meet these benchmarks and that 30,000 more

troops would bring about any real improvements in securing Iraq. The

GAO report shows that our concerns were justified.

With the failure of the Iraqi Government to meet 15 of the 18

benchmarks, it is clear that a change of course is needed. I would hope

that my Republican colleagues would stop blindly following President

Bush and conclude, much as this Nation has, that it is time to begin

bringing our troops home.