Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, President Bush said that we

had reached a turning point in Iraq. Given that he declared ``Mission

Accomplished'' and the end of major combat operations more than 3 years

ago, I would say it is about time we reached a turning point.

But as the Washington Post pointed out, this kind of turning point

language is pretty commonplace for the President. There have been many

milestones. There have been many turning points from this White House,

even a turning point in the history of freedom over the last several

years. The President should ask the people who risk their lives, their

bodies, and their minds every day, just walking down the streets of

Baghdad, if they see a turning point. We should ask the Iraqi citizens

how they see it.

The day after the President's last attempt at spin, more than 30

Iraqis were murdered in violent attacks. They joined tens of thousands

of other innocent civilians, many of them children, who have died for

the cause of their so-called ``liberation.'' There are some rumblings

now about drawing down our troop levels, but we have heard that before,

and I will believe it when I see it, and I will believe it to be real

when the President puts forward a plan on how he is going to end this

war.

Mr. Speaker, I have yet to hear the President disavow his statement

that the decision to bring our troops home will be for future

Presidents to decide. I have yet to hear a clear denial from the

administration that we have plans to build permanent military bases in

Iraq. If there is some kind of reduction in U.S. forces, my fear is

that it will be a cosmetic change only, driven more by the political

calendar than any kind of strategic consideration, ultimately making

the troops left in Iraq even more vulnerable than they are now.

The answer is not to get down to 100,000 troops by the end of the

year, because incremental steps are not enough. There must be a plan to

immediately end this occupation and bring every last one of our

soldiers home. The longer they stay, the longer suicide bombings will

persist, because our very presence is one of the principal causes of

the violence.

That is not our soldiers' fault. Of course, it isn't. They have

performed their services faithfully and courageously. It is their

civilian supervisors who have miscalculated at every turn. It is the

President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of Defense who refuse

to see that our military presence is fueling the rage of the

insurgency, intensifying hatred for America, and stoking the fires of

civil war.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for an entirely new approach to Iraq. It is

time for the United States to show real global leadership by helping

assemble a multinational security force to help keep Iraq stable in the

short term. It is time to help establish an international peace

commission under the auspices of the U.N. to begin the Iraq postwar

reconciliation process. It is time to turn Iraq over to the Iraqi

people. It is time to stop being Iraq's military occupier and start

being Iraq's reconstruction partner. It is time to rebuild the country

we have torn apart and to do it with an emphasis on transparency and

accountability and not on padding Halliburton's profit margins.

But before we take these steps, before we do anything, we must end

the war and bring our troops home to their families, where they belong.

That is the turning point that will make a real difference in the Iraq

situation.