Mr. Speaker, thank you.

I am very concerned about Iraq. Very concerned. The weather vane of

the Iraqi fight has shifted clearly to the Iraqis. It is theirs to win

or lose. General John Abizaid stated yesterday,

Last week, there were two developments in Iraq that I feel need to be

highlighted. First, the Marine Corps' chief of intelligence in Iraq has

reportedly described the situation in the Sunni-dominated Anbar

province as ``politically'' lost to al Qaeda. The second is the plan to

secure Baghdad from the insurgents by encircling it with, for lack of a

better word, a moat. The idea of a moat went out of style in the middle

ages. Both of these reports paint a less than rosy picture of how we

are faring in this war that has already cost so much in blood and

treasure. These two developments indicate that our level of effort is

insufficient to maintain control of the country.

On the basis of these and other reports, some analysts determined

that the solution to our problems in Baghdad and the Anbar province is

to send more troops to Iraq. This might sound like a plausible course

of action except for the fundamental problem that there are no more

units to send to Iraq. Oh, certainly we can surge units forward into

combat, but there is no way we can sustain that increase for any

significant period of time. The administration's poor planning and poor

strategic choices in Iraq have depleted our military of equipment and

manpower. Iraq has become a black hole, sapping our strategic base of

resources. The readiness situation has become so bad that our

nondeployed combat brigades report that if called today, they may not

be fully ready to complete all of their wartime missions.

The fact that our ground force readiness has fallen to such a

dangerous level risks emboldening our enemies both in Iraq and

elsewhere in the world. We must act now to reverse this decline.

Certainly spending more money on Army and Marine Corps readiness will

help. The Congress has provided additional funds to reset Army and

Marine Corps equipment. But even with that increased funding, it will

take some time for our units to get healthy again. I also strongly urge

the administration to submit a budget that realistically reflects the

services' needs.

But unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, additional money will not be enough.

We do not have the luxury of staying the course. The conflict in Iraq

has depleted our ground forces and placed this country at strategic

risk. We must start making significant progress in Iraq now, and the

best way to do it is by transitioning the responsibility for Iraqi

security to the Iraqis. I urge the administration to redouble its

efforts to train and equip the Iraqi security forces.