Mr. Speaker, stop the presses; we found Iraq's weapons

of mass destruction. Or at least that is what some Members of Congress

would have the American public believe. They stake this claim on an

unclassified portion of an intelligence report that addressed the

finding of 500 weapons shells of old, inert chemical agents from the

Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. The shells had been buried deep within the

ground near the Iranian border and forgotten by Iraqi soldiers.

Yesterday, intelligence officials made clear that these deactivated

shells were not the so-called weapons of mass destruction that the Bush

administration used as the basis for going to war in Iraq. Mr. Speaker,

a few weapons shells from a two-decade-old war does not a weapons of

mass destruction program make.

No matter how you slice it, no matter how you package the story,

Saddam Hussein simply didn't have a weapons of mass destruction program

in Iraq; yet, there are those who would stop at nothing to prove they

existed. It is as if finding the weapons of mass destruction would

somehow validate an unjust and unnecessary war that has been mismanaged

from the day it was first shamefully conceived.

Mr. Speaker, do a few weapons shells from a two-decade-old war

justify the 2,511 American soldiers who have been killed in Iraq? Do

they justify the more than 18,000 soldiers who have been wounded

forever? How about the countless others who have been traumatized

by psychological and physical injuries or the tens of thousands of

Iraqi civilians who have been killed?

Speaking of U.S. troops killed in Iraq, the President's new press

secretary recently called the 2,500th American casualty ``just a

number.''

But the American people know that this soldier and the other 2,510

soldiers who have been killed aren't just numbers; they are sons, they

are daughters, they are husbands and wives, they are fathers, they are

mothers; and each of them was willing to lay down their own life for

what they believed to be their duty as part of the U.S. military.

These brave men and women deserve a foreign policy worthy of their

sacrifice. Unfortunately, their civilian superiors at the Pentagon and

at the White House have let them down in many ways, but particularly by

referring to any troop, dead or alive, as just a number.

Instead of trying to justify a tremendously wrong-headed war by

pointing to decades-old shells buried in the ground, the Bush

administration ought to start engaging in a little something called

diplomacy. By going on a diplomatic offensive, the United States will

shift its role from that of Iraq's military occupier to its

reconstruction partner. We need to engage the United Nations to oversee

Iraq's economic and humanitarian needs. At the same time, we must

publicly renounce any desire to control Iraqi oil and ensure that the

United States does not maintain lasting military bases.

Engaging in diplomacy will give Iraq back to the Iraqi people,

helping them rebuild their economic and physical infrastructure,

creating Iraqi jobs, and ending the humiliation that corresponds with

another country maintaining 130,000 plus occupying troops on their

soil.

A strategy emphasizing the diplomacy is in line with an approach I

call SMART security. SMART stands for Sensible, Multi-Lateral, American

Response to Terrorism. Instead of throwing our military weight around

the world, SMART security utilizes multilateral partnerships, regional

security arrangements, and robust inspection programs to address the

threats of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Speaker, to be able to address the true threats we face as a

Nation, we need to retract ourselves from the very conflict that is

damaging our national security on a daily basis, and there is one and

only one, important way to begin this process. For the sake of our

soldiers, for the sake of their families, for the sake of our very own

national security, it is time to stop sacrificing lives and limbs. It

is time to stop spending billions of dollars on this war, and it is

time to bring our troops home.