Mr. Speaker, last week, Army General George Casey, the

top American military commander in Iraq, presented civilians leaders

here at home with a plan for sharply reducing the number of U.S. troops

in Iraq for September of this year.

According to reports, General Casey shared his plan with Secretary of

Defense Donald Rumsfeld; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Peter

Pace; and even President Bush himself.

The idea of an actual plan for how to end the war in Iraq is

something that many of us in Congress have been calling for over the

last several months and years. General Casey's plan reportedly suggests

reducing our troop presence by as much as 60 percent. But,

unfortunately, without a plan about how best to accomplish bringing our

troops home, a plan to protect the safety and ensure the safety of

135,000 American soldiers, this could haphazardly actually endanger the

remaining 40,000 to 50,000 soldiers and leave them behind as sitting

ducks.

Mr. Speaker, I have been calling for the President to present a plan

for bringing our troops home since December of 2005; and in May of last

year, when we held the first debate on Iraq on the House floor after

the beginning of the war itself, 128 Members of the House, more than

one-third of the Members of the House of Representatives, agreed that

the President needed to come up with a plan for bringing our troops

home and share it with the appropriate congressional committees.

Today, more than a year later and with the majority of the American

people agreeing that this senseless war needs to end as soon as

possible, that number would be surely higher.

The idea that the President invaded a country in the very first place

without a strategic goal in mind and without a plan for how to win and

how to leave is absolutely incomprehensible. And no one should confuse

the Bush administration's tired old line about staying the course for

an actual plan or a strategy. Lines like ``we will stay in Iraq until

the job gets done'' are nothing more than trite slogans.

What most Americans and nearly all Iraqis understand is that open-

ended U.S. military presence in Iraq does not serve either Americans or

Iraqis. The very perception that we plan to stay in Iraq permanently at

any level is one of the greatest catalysts spurring the Iraqi

insurgency. Just yesterday, 11 Sunni insurgent groups publicly stated

that they would immediately halt all terrorist attacks in Iraq,

including those against American troops, if the United States would

publicly commit to leaving within the next 2 years.

It is clear that the time is long overdue to bring our troops home.

For goodness sakes, the American people are for this. The Iraqis are

for this. Why can't Congress be for this? Is it not time we caught up

with the people we are supposed to be working for?

Every week, every day, every hour we stay in Iraq is costing us

dozens of American and Iraqi lives, hundreds of physical and

psychological wounds, and billions of dollars. Let us send a message to

our troops, let us send a message to the rest of the world that the

values of diplomacy, multilateral cooperation, and respect for others'

freedoms are the paramount American values, the qualities we stand for

as a Nation, not endless war and certainly not the occupation of a

sovereign people.

Since the beginning of the war, President Bush has said we would

leave Iraq as soon as the military commanders on the ground told him it

was time to do so. Well, now the highest-ranking military leader in

Iraq has presented a plan for bringing our troops home. For the sake of

our soldiers, their families and the people of the United States and

Iraq, it is time for the President to keep his end of the bargain, but,

Mr. Speaker, not without a plan, one presented to the Congress. He

didn't have a plan going into the war, he didn't have a plan to win the

war, but he must have a plan leaving the war. Otherwise, our troops

will once again be under great danger.