Mr. Speaker, the President has announced a plan to

redeploy troops from Iraq, and if you're watching the nightly news or

pick up a paper, you might think that the occupation was actually over.

But when was the last time you saw a major TV news story from Iraq or

some ink at least above the fold about Iraq?

Sadly, the United States' occupation of Iraq is far from over. The

need still remains for a stable nation and a stable Iraqi Government

that is able to provide basic services and a sense of normalcy and

support of the rule of law for everyone in Iraq.

Almost 6 years ago today, the United States military was mobilized in

a preemptive attack on Iraq. By now we all know there were no weapons

of mass destruction. However, destruction was left in the wake of the

invasion. Both the Iraqi and American Governments

must focus on these immediate pressing human needs rather than

continuing military presence. A prolonged occupation is not the answer.

Prosperity and stability will not come at the end of a gun. We must

support reconstruction. We must support reconciliation efforts. And we

must find the best way out of Iraq so that we can begin all of this.

And the best way is by bringing our troops and military contractors

home from Iraq so then we can give Iraq back to the Iraqis and work

with them to rebuild reconciliation and to return to their homes.

Families face unimaginable hardships, from widespread violence and

suicide attacks to the destruction of their schools, their hospitals,

and utility providers. Some of the devastation can be and is actually

visible, and it's rubble that still litters the streets and walled-off

sections of neighborhoods.

The more difficult picture to capture is that of the refugees.

Millions have fled their homes never to return. Nationwide there are

between 1.6 million and 2.8 million internally displaced people,

refugees who left their homes but not Iraq. According to the

International Organization of Migration, only 288,000 have returned

home. Refugees International calls this one of the largest humanitarian

and displacement crises in the world. They say ``most are unable to

access their food rations and are often unemployed; they live in

squalid conditions, have run out of resources, and find it extremely

difficult to access essential services.''

Mr. Speaker, the Iraqi Government has established a program to

reimburse Iraqi families who have lost their homes. Most families get

about half of their home's value, and that's when someone can safely

come into the area to assess the damage. This process is slow going and

will never make these families whole.

But to what are Iraqi families returning? Refugees International

found that some Iraqis who have tried to return home have found their

homes occupied or destroyed, the likelihood of violence still high, a

collapse of social services, and neighborhoods divided into sectarian

areas.

Sadly, the U.S. occupation has caused this to happen. But the good

news is we have a chance to bring our troops home, give Iraq back to

the Iraqi people, and let them have their sovereignty and let them get

home to their properties. We need to help them do that. What we don't

need to be doing is spending more money on the military occupation in

Iraq.