Mr. Speaker, in January, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-

Maliki publicly committed to meeting a set of benchmarks, including

quelling sectarian violence, disarming sectarian militias and

developing a plan to share oil revenues equitably among all Iraqis.

In May, Congress, in a bipartisan way, made clear that the Iraqi

government should be held accountable for meeting those benchmarks and

required the President to report on the Iraqi Government's progress in

meeting those goals.

That report, which was released today, demonstrates the President's

surge is failing and that the Iraqi Government is failing to meet the

benchmarks it agreed to meet 7 months ago.

The Iraqi Government has not moved toward national reconciliation.

This morning, we learned that Director of Central Intelligence General

Michael Hayden, an accomplished four-star general, told the bipartisan

Iraq Study Group 8 months ago that Iraq's leaders are ``unable to

govern.''

Now, the inability of the Iraqi Government to govern seems

irreversible. If there is no functioning government in Iraq, how do we

expect to fix the problems in that country militarily?

We continue to see the serious consequences that result from that

inability to govern. Sectarian violence has not been quelled; it

continues to escalate. Sectarian militias have not been disarmed; they

continue to wreak havoc. There has been no progress on a plan to share

oil revenues equitably among all Iraqis.

The situation is rapidly deteriorating and American troops are caught

in the crossfire.

Continued U.S. involvement in Iraq must be contingent on the Iraqi

Government keeping its word. Benchmarks without accountability are not

benchmarks at all. They are blank checks. And I refuse to allow the

Iraqi Government, or any government, to have a blank check on American

lives.

The time has come to redeploy American troops from Iraq and reduce

the U.S. military role in Iraq. We must do so in a responsible way that

will help us better meet our strategic objectives and renew our fight

against global terrorism.

I am convinced that this course, combined with stepping up our

diplomatic efforts, provide the best opportunity to achieve our

strategic objectives, reduce sectarian violence and force Iraq's

leaders to get serious about Iraqi reconciliation and stabilization

efforts.

As their failure to meet the benchmarks clearly illustrates, Iraq's

leaders are unwilling and incapable of moving toward national

reconciliation. If the United States allows the Iraqi government to

have an open-ended timetable to meet these benchmarks, and demands no

accountability, our troops may literally be in harm's way forever. We

cannot continue to allow the safety of our troops to be placed in the

hands of Iraqi leaders who have failed to keep their word or are

incapable of meeting their obligations.

Make no mistake: the deteriorating situation in Iraq is not a result

of military failure. Our nation's armed forces crushed Saddam Hussein's

regime in one of the most complete and impressive military victories in

the history of our country.

The disaster in Iraq is a result of the Bush Administration's failure

to plan and failure to listen. It is a result of misplaced trust in the

Malaki government. It is a result of mismanagement and incompetence.

Even worse, the administration's failed policy in Iraq has limited

the success of our mission in Afghanistan, and hindered our ability to

destroy al Qaeda's international operations. As a result, U.S.

intelligence analysts say al Qaeda is the strongest it has ever been

since the September 11, 2001, attacks. We must renew our commitment to

leading the fight against global terrorism and destroying al Qaeda.

Our Nation is at a critical crossroad in Iraq, and Congress has a

difficult choice to make. But one thing is clear: staying the course is

not an option. We can ill afford to continue down the same course of

failure that has undermined our mission in Iraq, and undermined our

ability to protect our Nation from terrorist threats.