I thank my good friend for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, this administration has mishandled the situation in Iraq

from the very beginning.

It misled the country into a war based on false and misleading

statements about the threat from Iraq.

It failed to plan for the aftermath of the military victory.

It assumed that we would be greeted as liberators, the occupation

would be brief, and that Iraq would pay for its own reconstruction.

It sent our troops to battle with dangerous shortages in body armor

and devices needed to defuse remote-controlled bombs.

It sent in too few troops to Iraq to provide security, leaving the

Iraqi people to rely on their sectarian militias to give them some

protection from the chaos.

It disbanded the Iraqi army and, through an anti-Baathists campaign,

gave the Sunnis a sense that the U.S. was aiding the Shiites against

them.

It refused to take on war profiteering, even as auditors,

investigators and inspector generals unearthed massive graft, fraud and

abuse by reconstruction contractors.

It alienated the Iraqi people with the shameful and criminal acts of

Abu Ghraib prison.

What we now have in Iraq is a defeat. We cannot achieve the illusions

of the Bush administration that we will be able to create a stable,

unified, liberal democracy in Iraq that is pro-American. Instead, we

have sectarian fighting, death squads and a destabilized Middle East

that threatens to be engulfed by the nightmare that we have unleashed.

The administration's mistakes have weakened our fight against al

Qaeda. In fact, the war has enhanced the group's terrorist recruitment.

The planned escalation in Iraq will divert more troops, resources and

attention from the pursuit of Osama bin Laden's operation in

Afghanistan; and we have enhanced the influence of Iran, not just in

Iraq but throughout the region.

The President proposes an escalation of a failed policy. The fighting

now only prolongs our losses and blocks the way to a new strategy. We

are trying now to mediate a civil war, which is impossible. Instead, we

are being drawn into that civil war by trying to prop up

a government that, in the final analysis, cannot unite the country.

Politically, this administration has tied the faith of American

soldiers to a Shi'a-dominated government that lacks the authority, the

will and the manpower to stop the roving gangs and insurgent militias

that have shattered Iraqi society. Instead of acknowledging these

failures and embarking on a new course of action, the President gives

us more of the same: Send more troops to Iraq.

We need to redefine our mission and our hopes for ``success.'' Our

goal should be to try to stabilize the situation, stop the killing,

contain the violence.

We cannot do it alone, and we cannot do it militarily. We must seek a

diplomatic strategy with Iraq's neighbors and the international

community.

Certainly, it will take more action than just the resolution before

us to bring about the policy changes that we need. The Congress must

stand ready to use the checks and balances necessary to extract

ourselves from the morass we face in Iraq. We can do that through more

oversight, but it is also time for Congress to use the appropriations

process to end this war.

We should pass this resolution and make it clear to the President

that we will not stand for more of the same.