Mr. Speaker, before we respond to the

President's call for an additional 20,000 troops in Iraq, we must put

his call in the context of the history of the war, beginning with the

discussion of what the current 130,000 troops are doing there now.

The original reasons we were provided with the rationale for going to

war, that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, that Iraqi leaders were

connected with the 9/11 attacks, and that Iraq posed an imminent threat

to the United States, all turned out not to be true. Saddam Hussein was

captured and recently hanged, al-Zarqawi is dead, and Iraq held

democratic elections over a year ago, and yet we are still in Iraq.

Throughout the war, the President has attempted to associate our

presence in Iraq with a so-called war on terrorism. The truth is that

our presence in Iraq has actually increased our risk to terrorism.

Furthermore, the term ``war on terrorism'' is a rhetorical term

without any relationship to reality. Terrorism is not an enemy. It is a

tactic. The enemy is al Qaeda. We attacked Afghanistan because al Qaeda

was there, not in Iraq.

The President is now saying he is laying out a new mission in Iraq,

thereby clearly acknowledging that, whatever the old mission was, it

was not working. But there is still no clearly defined end goal and no

clearly defined explanation of how failure or success can be measured.

If our mission now is to stabilize Baghdad, many military experts

have already said that an additional force of 20,000 troops is woefully

insufficient to

accomplish that goal. The fact is that the administration has already

increased troop levels on several occasions during this war. None of

the previous surges in troop levels have had any lasting effect on the

war, and there is no credible evidence to believe that this surge will

be any different.

And how can we have confidence in predictions of success? Before our

invasion in Iraq, Secretary Rumsfeld predicted that the war in Iraq

would last ``6 days, 6 weeks. I doubt 6 months.'' Vice President Cheney

predicted we would be greeted as liberators.

Almost 4 years ago, the President stood before a sign that said

``Mission Accomplished'' and proclaimed major combat operations in Iraq

have ended.

A year and a half ago Vice President Cheney said the Iraqis were ``in

the last throes'' of the insurgency. And yet here we are discussing an

increase, not a decrease, in troop levels.

At the outset of this war, the administration predicted that the cost

of the war would be so minuscule that it advised the House Committee on

the Budget not even to include the cost of the war in the Federal

budget. The administration official who suggested that the cost of the

war might exceed $100 billion was fired. To date we have appropriated

nearly $400 billion, and the President has already formally requested

another $200 billion more, with no end in sight.

Over 3,100 courageous Americans and countless Iraqis have already

lost their lives. How many more will die if this strategy falls as far

from the predicted result as the original length of time and cost

estimates of the war?

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, as part of developing a mission and

strategy, it is imperative that we ask where these additional troops

are going to come from. Many will undoubtedly come from the National

Guard and Reserves, but they have already been in Iraq for longer-than-

average deployments and many have already completed multiple tours of

duty. Other troops must be redeployed from other assignments; so we

must ask what moving these troops will mean to our global national

security.

Last November the American people sent a powerful message. They want

a change in Iraq, not more of the same. They expect an honest

explanation of why we entered Iraq in the first place, what the present

situation is, what goal do we expect to achieve, and what the strategy

will be to accomplish it. Only then can we intelligently discuss the

troop levels necessary to accomplish that goal. Unfortunately, all we

have gotten from this administration is essentially ``Don't worry, be

happy, success is around the corner; and if you don't believe that,

then you are not patriotic and you are not supporting the troops.''

For my colleagues who say that failure is not an option, I ask what

will happen if the President's so-called ``New Way Forward'' fails, as

many experts predict it will? Are we then required to further escalate

the war, further strain our military, sending thousands more of our

troops to Iraq? How many more of our young men and women must die

before the administration acknowledges what was in the National

Intelligence Estimate? And I quote, ``The term `civil war' accurately

describes key elements of the Iraqi conflict.' ''

Mr. Speaker, although the resolution before us is technically

nonbinding, it gives the House an opportunity to call upon the

President to work cooperatively with Congress to develop an effective

strategy to bring our troops home. The American people and our

courageous men and women on the front lines deserve a clearly

articulated and sensible approach to ending the war. This resolution

puts the House on record as saying that an escalation of military

forces is a step in the wrong direction.

I therefore urge my colleagues to support the resolution.