Madam Speaker, I wish to address three

questions here on the floor today: Where are we? Where do we want to

be? How do we get there?

First, where are we? We're in phase 3 of a conflict in Iraq. In Phase

1 we overran Iraq in response to an American national security threat.

We won.

Then came Phase 2. We were forwardly deployed; the terrorists brought

the fight to us; we busted up terrorist networks; America was protected

from further attacks. We won.

Now comes Phase 3. At best, Iraq is engulfed in a sectarian killing

spree. At worst, Iraq has descended into a civil war.

So where are we? We're thankful for the incredible work of our

military in winning Phase 1 and 2. We're aware--and I think all of us

are aware--that only the Iraqi people can win Phase 3. We're united in

imploring the Iraqi people to choose order over chaos; pluralism over

theocracy; and freedom over authoritarianism. As we had the help of the

French, the Iraqis have had the help the United States.

But just as it was only American patriots who could decide the future

of our country, only Iraqi patriots can decide the future of their

country. It is a neo-con mistake to charge our war fighters with

building an Iraqi national consensus. Iraqis must decide for themselves

if they want to live in a unified, peaceful and pluralistic Iraq. No

amount of American military might can compel that result.

So where are we? Thankful for success in the outcomes that we could

control; aware of the outcomes that we cannot control.

Where do we want to be? We want the Iraqis to take responsibility for

their own country. The President is wisely pressing them to do so. We

want the Iraqi leadership to make some key political decisions that

could bring reconciliation. We want them to divide up the oil fairly,

to allow banned Baathists back into positions of public trust and to

develop a working model of pluralism.

We want the Iraqi leadership to know that they don't have forever,

that they should settle these reconciliation questions quickly. We want

them to know that we are not content to provide an overall security

umbrella for their country while they dispatch death squads to kill

their enemies and improve their sectarian positions. We want them to

know that we're reaching for the button that would lower that umbrella.

And we want to avoid the error of nation building.

The job of the U.S. military is to crush, kill and destroy the

enemies of the United States. They are not nation builders; they are

warriors. And they do their jobs very, very well. As commanded, our

military entered Iraq to destroy what we understandably believed were

threats to our national security.

We were successful in destroying those threats and thereafter in

interrupting terrorist networks. Those were outcomes that we could

control.

Now we are rightly asked for inputs that we can control but we are

faced with outcomes that only the Iraqi people can control. It is right

to evaluate the quality of our forces' inputs, but wrong to hold them

accountable for outcomes beyond their control. Diplomats, statesmen,

peacemakers and everyday Iraqis must work with us to develop a path to

progress--a path that has milestones along the way and which has

rewards for meeting those milestones and consequences for failure. Our

military must help plan the path because they are the most stable and

trustworthy institution on the ground in Iraq and because they are

experts at planning and logistics.

Since our military is in control of the ``planning'' input, they will

rightly be evaluated on the basis of the quality of that planning.

Because they are the most trained and capable force in the world, our

military must also continue to provide protection for the

decision makers as they plan the path to progress. The quality of that

protection is an input that will rightly be evaluated.

Because they are experts at discipline and structure, our military

must help define the agreed-upon milestones, the rewards for meeting

those milestones and the consequences for missing them. The quality of

those inputs will rightly be evaluated.

Because they are capable, our military must provide strength for the

first steps on the path. The quality of that strength and the

capabilities with which it is delivered will rightly be evaluated.

Having well supplied those inputs, the American military will leave

Iraq successful--in Phase 1, 2 and 3. If the Iraqi people follow the

path to progress to a peaceful, pluralist and unified Iraq, they will

have been successful. The path may lead to something less.

Any lesser outcome is the responsibility of the Iraqi people. So we

want a path to progress, and we hope for the blessings of liberty for

Iraq.

Now. how do we get there? The President has ordered an increase in

troop strength in Iraq. He thinks a surge in troops will give breathing

room for the development of a path to progress.

I'm concerned that a surge will have the opposite effect--that it

will give breathing room to the death squads, that our service men and

women will be caught in the crossfire and that the surge will end right

where it began. In fact, that's what happened in Baghdad in August and

September of 2006.

I'm concerned that a surge sends a conflicting message. On the one

hand we're telling them, ``You don't have forever; you've got to make

progress in solving these political questions; you've got to stop

legging up on your enemies; it's your country.'' By surging, we may be

saying, ``Not to worry, we're increasing the size of that American

security umbrella; there's no urgency; we're here to stay; in fact,

more of us are coming.''

I want all Iraqi factions and leaders of factions to worry. I want

them to see us reaching for the button that would bring that umbrella

down. I want them to imagine the click of that button and the feel of

the wind from the descending umbrella.

The resolution before us isn't written the way I would have written

it, but it's the resolution before us. Resolutions are the way that

Congress discharges its constitutional responsibility to communicate

with the President. This resolution says, ``We disapprove of the

surge.''

Parties on both sides have added additional and conflicting meaning

to those words. In the end, I just have to vote on the basis of the

words. That's why I'm going to vote in favor of the resolution and

express my concern about the effectiveness of the surge.

Unlike many others who will vote for this resolution, I will not

follow it with a vote to cut off funding. Nor will I follow it with a

vote to withdraw immediately. Both of those actions would be mistaken.

Some will say that I am too impatient and insistent for decisions

from the Iraqi leadership. It's true that it took us nearly 100 years

to figure out that slavery was antithetical to freedom. It took us even

longer to figure out that women should have the right to vote.

But as I had the opportunity to say to one of Prime Minister Maliki's

advisors in Baghdad in August, it is our right as Iraq's protector and

our obligation to our servicemen and women to insist on a timetable for

these decisions. I've only been to Iraq twice. Both times I found that

the hardest thing was leaving.

While there, surrounded by America's best, I had the sense that I was

at ground zero of mission and purpose. The Americans serving in Iraq

are the most impressive people in the

world. Everyone of them is a volunteer. Everyone of them, everyone of

their predecessors and everyone of their non-deployed comrades has

offered his or her life in preservation of our lives.

America's best deserve our best--our clearest thinking, our freshest

analysis, our steadfast devotion. Forget the political consequences;

protect no one's ``legacy;'' don't worry about ``saving face;'' make

sound decisions; take decisive action. Tell them what their mission is.

Discharge the Constitutional responsibility of the Congress. Give them

a clear description of the inputs we expect from them. Evaluate them on

the quality of those inputs but don't hold them accountable for

outcomes they cannot control.

Ask them to do accomplishable things. Don't ask them to do the

impossible.

No amount of force can cause someone to choose freedom, and freedom

cannot be given--it must be earned. We have provided the conditions

under which freedom can take root. Iraqis must nurture the seed and

water it with their own sweat and blood.

If they do so, Iraq will enjoy the blessings of liberty. If they

don't, our military will nevertheless have been successful.