Madam Speaker, I have listened to some of the debate on

this resolution. I have been disappointed by the misleading talking

points and faulty analysis that have been repeatedly used by those who

support the President's escalation of the war in Iraq.

Many speakers have tied Iraq to the broader war against al-Qaeda.

These are two distinct wars. Iraq had not declared war on the U.S. Al-

Qaeda had. Iraq did not attack the U.S. Al-Qaeda did. Iraq did not

harbor al-Qaeda leaders. The Taliban in Afghanistan did. By shifting

military and intelligence resources out of Afghanistan before the

Taliban and al-Qaeda were wiped out the administration has actually

undermined the important war against al-Qaeda. The administration's

blunders mean the U.S. is at risk of losing two wars at once:

Afghanistan and Iraq. The war in Afghanistan is salvageable and

winnable. The war in Iraq will not be won by military means alone.

Vigorous diplomatic efforts within the Gulf region, in addition to a

political realignment within Iraq will be necessary .

U.S. intelligence agencies, including military intelligence agencies,

have refuted the claim that the conflict in Iraq is driven by al-Qaeda.

It is not. The violence is driven by a civil war, primarily between

Iraqi Sunnis and Shias. The recent National Intelligence Estimate

should definitively put that issue to rest.

Even the President has recognized that al Qaeda is not the driving

force for violence in Iraq. In a speech on December 12, 2005, the

President made important distinctions between the insurgent elements in

Iraq. He mentioned ``rejectionists,'' which are mostly Sunnis who miss

the privileged status they enjoyed under Saddam Hussein. He mentioned

``Saddamists'', who are former regime elements who want to return to

power. Again, they are Sunni. And, he mentioned foreign terrorists

affiliated with or inspired by al Qaeda, which even the President

acknowledged was the ``smallest'' element of the insurgency. The one

huge element he left out was nationalist Shias, such as those

influenced by radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

The President and his allies justify the continuing U.S. presence in

Iraq by claiming that if we don't fight there, we'll have to fight here

at home. However, the Iraqi Sunni rejectionists, Saddamists, and

nationalist Shias, who combined make up the vast bulk of the insurgents

and militias committing violence in Iraq, have no interest and no

capability to attack the U.S. homeland. They just want U.S. military

forces out of their own country. U.S. forces are a target of

convenience in their escalating civil conflict. It is deceitful to

argue that if we don't fight there, we will fight them in the streets

of the United States.

The war in Iraq is not a part of the war against al Qaeda. And, in

fact the war in Iraq is undermining our fight against al Qaeda.

Some in this debate have made the ridiculous argument that if the

U.S. leaves Iraq that somehow Osama bin Laden will take control and

establish a safe haven for terrorists to attack the U.S. There is no

chance that the Shias and Kurds, who represent around 80 percent of the

population in Iraq, will allow Sunni foreign terrorist elements like

al-Qaeda to take over the country. Even many Sunnis have grown tired of

foreign terrorists operating in Iraq, with several Sunni tribes

fighting al Qaeda operatives.

Iran and al Qaeda are the primary beneficiaries of the U.S. invasion

of Iraq and the two entities that most want the U.S. to stay there.

With respect to Iran, the U.S. removed a threatening neighbor of Iran's

and helped put in power a fellow Shiite regime, in addition to tying

down the U.S. military and sowing international discord that has

limited our options in confronting Iran's nuclear program. With respect

to al Qaeda, U.S. intelligence agencies have noted that Iraq is serving

as a training ground for terrorists and a recruiting poster that is

swelling the ranks of terrorist organizations and inspiring attacks

around the world.

It is past time to end the open-ended commitment the President has

made in Iraq. As long as the U.S. military remains stuck with the

President's pledge of open-ended support, Iraqi politicians and

security forces will use the U.S. presence as a crutch. They will

continue to fail to take the necessary steps to solve their

differences, establish an effective and inclusive government, end

sectarian violence, and create the foundation for a secure and

prosperous society.

Democracy and stability cannot be imposed on unwilling parties. As

New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman said on Meet the Press, a

stable, pluralistic democracy in Iraq is everyone's second choice

except ours. The Shias want power for themselves. The Sunnis want

power. And the Kurds want power and independence. What they don't want

to do is share that power. The President's stay-the-course, more-of-

the-same, status quo policy provides no incentive for the parties to

reach the political compromises that are necessary.

Negotiating a timeline for bringing home U.S. troops with responsible

parties in the Iraqi government would also boost the Iraqi government's

legitimacy and claim to self-rule, and force the Iraqi government to

take responsibility for itself and its citizens. Negotiating a

withdrawal time line and strategy with the Iraqi government could, more

than possibly anything else, improve the standing of the Iraqi

government in the eyes of its own people, a significant achievement in

a region in which the standing of rulers and governments is generally

low.

As the Iraqi National Security Advisor, Mowaffak al-Rabaie wrote in

the Washington Post on June 20, 2006, the removal of U.S. troops from

Iraq, ``will help the Iraqis who now see foreign troops as occupiers

rather than the liberators they were meant to be. It will remove

psychological barriers and the reason that many Iraqis joined the so-

called resistance in the first place.'' He went on to write,

``Moreover, the removal of foreign troops will legitimize Iraq's

government in the eyes of its people . . . the drawdown of foreign

troops will strengthen our fledgling government to last the full four

years it is supposed to.''

Being confronted with the reality of a U.S. withdrawal should force

the Iraqi factions to reach the political compromises necessary to move

their country forward. If not, there is no reason to prolong the U.S.

involvement in Iraq if we want a stable country more than the Iraqi

people and their elected leaders do. The U.S. cannot force Sunnis,

Shias, and Kurds to make peace or to act for the common good. They have

been in conflict for 1,400 years. Nor should the U.S. military be

forced to remain in Iraq essentially as an army for one side of a civil

war. Supporters of escalating the war may pretend that they're doing it

for the Iraqis, but large majorities of both Sunnis and Shias approve

of attacks against U.S. troops and want us to bring them home.

The President believes that the U.S. needs to escalate the war in

Iraq by sending more than 20,000 additional troops to Iraq. I think

that is a mistake. It will not bring stability to Iraq, and I oppose

it. That is why I will vote for the resolution on the floor this week.

The administration blunders in Iraq are well-known. They went in with

too few troops against the advice of military leaders like General

Shinseki. They disbanded the Iraqi army. They failed to understand the

ethnic tensions and power bases in Iraq. They purged the Iraqi

government of the bureaucratic experience necessary to have a

functioning government, among others.

I do not believe there is any level of U.S. troops that could

stabilize Iraq at this point and resolve the underlying ages old

sectarian conflicts. The time when more troops might have made a

lasting difference has come and gone. There might be a small, temporary

reduction in the chaos in Iraq, but the escalation will not solve the

deep and underlying political conflicts that are preventing a long-term

resolution to the violence.

The administration already increased the number of U.S. troops in

Baghdad last summer in Operation Together Forward and has increased the

number of troops throughout Iraq at other times as well, yet the

violence against our troops and Iraqi security forces and civilians

continues to increase. Short-term improvements in security in the wake

of U.S. troop increases have always given way to the long-term trend of

increased violence and a growing civil war.

Based on historical analysis, counterinsurgency experts, including

General Petraeus, who is now the top U.S. General in Iraq but also

recently rewrote the Army's counterinsurgency manual, estimate it takes

around 20 U.S. troops per 1,000 inhabitants to successfully fight a

counterinsurgency. To achieve that ratio in Baghdad alone would require

120,000 troops. Even with the increase proposed by the President, the

U.S. would only have a third of that at best. For all of Iraq, it would

require 500,000 troops. General Shinseki's original estimate that it

would take several hundred thousands troops to invade and stabilize

Iraq was based on this counterinsurgency literature. After the

escalation we'll only have around 160,000.

The bottom line is that a proposal to increase U.S. troop levels in

Baghdad or Iraq more generally by more than 20,000 is not a serious

effort to restore stability to Iraq. As General John Abizaid, then the

head of all U.S. forces in the Middle East, testified before the Senate

Armed Services Committee hearing on November 15, 2006, ``I met with

every divisional commander, General Casey, the corps commander, General

Dempsey, we all talked together. And I said, in your professional

opinion, if we were to bring in more American Troops now, does it add

considerably to our ability to achieve success in Iraq? And they all

said no. And the reason is because we want the Iraqis to do more. It is

easy for the Iraqis to rely upon us to do this work. I believe that

more American forces prevent the Iraqis from doing more, from taking

more responsibility for their own future.'' Essentially, the President

is proposing to put more lives at risk with virtually no chance of

changing the dynamic in Iraq.

A better strategy for Iraq is to announce a timeline negotiated with

the Iraqi government for bringing our troops home over the next 6

months to a year. The administration has always set timelines for

political developments in Iraq--for elections, for the drafting of the

constitution etc. The administration argued such timelines were

necessary to focus the energy of Iraq's leaders and to force

compromises. We need to do the same on the military side.

In the interim, I have also proposed that U.S. troops be removed from

front line combat positions in Iraqi cities and towns, turning over

daily security patrols, interactions with citizens, and any offensive

security actions to the Iraqis themselves.

The training and equipping of Iraqi security forces should be

accelerated and the sectarian balance must be improved.

The U.S. must renounce any U.S. interest in constructing permanent

U.S. military bases in Iraq.

It is also important to accelerate reconstruction spending and grant

the bulk of reconstruction contracts to local companies employing

Iraqis rather than multinational corporations, whom have proven

inefficient, inflexible, sometimes fraudulent and have even imported

workers rather than employing Iraqis.

The U.S. embassy in Baghdad should also be reduced to normal size and

authority rather than establishing one of the largest embassies in the

world.

And, the U.S. must engage in robust diplomacy with all factions in

Iraq, except the foreign terrorists and domestic al Qaeda elements, and

work with Iraq's neighbors in an effort to bring about political

reconciliation among Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds.

Our troops have done all that has been asked of them in Iraq. Saddam

Hussein is dead. His allies are on the run or in prison. The threat

from WMDs in Iraq is nonexistent. Arguably, the war that Congress

authorized has been won. Our troops should come home. Congress did not

authorize U.S. troops to referee a civil war in Iraq.