Madam Speaker, for almost 4 years the

administration has been saying, just give us more time, just give us

more money, our plan will bring peace. And now they are saying, we need

more troops, 48,000 of them. But we have already had four troop

increases since we went into Iraq and none of them have brought

stability.

Tragically, this war has cost more than 3,100 American lives, 143

from my home State of New York, and thousands of Iraqi lives, as well

as more than 20,000 injured American soldiers who will carry their

wounds for the rest of their lives.

The bipartisan Hamilton-Baker Commission called for a different

approach. They said: ``The situation in Iraq is grave and

deteriorating.'' As Mr. Hamilton said: ``The current approach is not

working. And the ability of the U.S. to influence events is

diminishing.''

The commission called for greater use of diplomacy. And the

commission's report stated clearly that we must not make an open-ended

commitment to keep large numbers of American troops in Iraq. They

warned that doing so would continue to stretch our troops too thin,

hampering our abilities to simultaneously face other threats in the

world.

It would severely affect America's army readiness, and it would not

give the Iraqi Government the incentive needed to help bring security.

If this assessment is so clearly in opposition to a long-term

deployment in Iraq, why is the administration doing the exact opposite?

They are calling for a bigger commitment of troops, for more

expenditure of lives and treasure with no end in sight. They speak of

victory, but what is victory? Was it finding weapons of mass

destruction? There were none. Was it a nuclear weapons program? There

was not one. Was Iraq an imminent threat to our security? We were told

it was, but in fact it was not.

They claimed that they would exhaust all options before taking

military action. But they did not even wait for the weapons inspectors'

final report. Was our goal to impose democracy on the entire Middle

East? The war has inflamed and destabilized the region. Whatever their

justification, they have embarked on a policy that is dragging America

into the mire of another country's civil war.

In this civil war we don't know who's shooting. We just know that all

sides are shooting at us. We also now know that there was no al Qaeda

connection in Iraq before we invaded. The Pentagon's Inspector General

has reported that Douglas Feith, the Pentagon's Under Secretary, cooked

intelligence reports to make a case to go to war based on al Qaeda. It

is tragically ironic that now by invading we have actually made Iraq

fertile territory for al Qaeda recruitment.

Madam Speaker, on top of their rush to war and their insufficient

planning, their mismanagement is legendary. They initially estimated

that the war would cost 50 to $60 billion. But by the end of this year,

Congress will have spent about half a trillion dollars, ten times the

original estimate.

Last week, we had a hearing on $12 billion that was airlifted into

the war zone and now $8.8 billion is unaccounted for, completely

missing. Madam Speaker, how much mismanagement and misdirection can

this country tolerate?

In November, Americans voted for a new direction for the war, a new

direction for Congress. I rise in support of this new direction and

against this escalation in Iraq.