Mr. Speaker, there is a concept from the

people of West Africa called Sankofa. Literally translated, it means,

``It is not taboo to go back and fetch what you have forgot.''

Today, I want to use the premise of Sankofa and go back to some of

the things that have occurred in the recent past with regard to Iraq so

that we can learn from those lessons. In order to know where we need to

go in Iraq, we have to evaluate what missteps have been made. That is

our responsibility.

As we look at the last 5 years, the President has shown no accuracy

on the challenges we face in Iraq. While our soldiers are courageously

carrying out their orders, it has become apparent that military action

to bring security to Iraq has reached its limitation, but our President

insists on escalating military force.

I recall over 4 years ago hearing the President and the

administration push for war with talk about a smoking gun that would

come in the form of a mushroom cloud. The administration pulled on the

emotions of the public while our Nation was still in shock from 9/11.

Our President pushed for war with arrogance. ``Bring it on,'' he said.

Coalition of the willing. Deck of cards. Freedom on the march. Mission

accomplished. A plan for victory. Those are just some of the promises

that have been made, but the administration has not been able to make

good on those promises. It is fair to say that the President has

defaulted on a promissory note.

Today, the question before us is can the President make good on the

promise of security in Iraq with an escalation of the combat operation.

All of the facts point to a strong ``no'' on that question.

After reviewing all of the facts, I saw that increased troops did not

work in the spring of 2004, when troop levels were raised by thousands,

but this did nothing to prevent the continued uprising, and April of

2004 was the second deadliest month for American forces. I have heard

from generals, former Secretaries of State, and a bipartisan

commission, all saying that escalation will not work. I am vehemently

opposed to the escalation of the Iraq war and its open-ended commitment

to a failing effort.

The President only accepts the advice of those who agree with him.

After months of threats and a long military build-up, the United States

attacked Iraq on March 19, 2003. The administration cut short U.N. arms

inspections after a war-sanctioned resolution failed by a wide margin

to gain support in the U.N. Security Council. Because the President

could not get the U.N. or the world public in support of an invasion,

he developed his unilateral preemptive doctrine.

The President has had generals tell him that this war should end and

an escalation is not the answer; but when he gets advice he doesn't

like, he simply fires the generals.

He has had a commission of experts advise him that a diplomatic

political effort with all of Iraq's neighbors would be the most

effective way to enable the U.S. to move its combat forces out of Iraq

responsibly. However, the President did not like that advice, so he has

chosen to simply ignore it.

When the President needed Congress to approve military action against

Iraq, he cared about the perspective of the Congress then. As Congress

begins to conduct oversight of the combat operation, the President

wants to ignore the voices of dissent that come from this very body.

The cameras of history are rolling, and I hope and pray that at the

end of this debate history can record that this body, starting with

this resolution as a first step, has taken the appropriate action to

end a morally wrong war that threatens to irreversibly stain the fabric

of Congress if we do not exercise our constitutional authority and our

patriotic responsibility to balance the President's power.

To move forward and bring security to Iraq will require a bipartisan

effort; it will require dialogue with Congress, dialogue between

Congress and the administration, and dialogue and diplomacy between

Iraq and all of its neighbors, as the Iraq Study Group wisely

recommended. I am reaching across the aisle to my colleagues who also

believe that military action has its limitations and a diplomatic

offensive will bring a new and critical approach to secure Iraq.

This war has created deep humanitarian crisis in Iraq and a deep

political crisis in the international system. Based on all that has

happened leading up to this war and since its commencement, I cannot in

good conscience support any escalation of military force in Iraq. But I

plan to move forward with a strong push for a diplomatic effort to a

problem that military action simply has not been able to solve.

Some ask what will happen in Iraq if we leave, but the more

fundamental question is, what will happen to Iraq and the United States

if we stay.

Dr. King, when speaking on Vietnam once said, ``A time comes when

silence is betrayal. That time has come for us in relation to

Vietnam.'' I echo those sentiments today. If Congress is silent while

the President escalates the war in Iraq, we betray the American people,

we betray the American soldiers, and we betray our constitutional

responsibility.