Mr. Speaker, for a President whose party controls both

Houses of Congress, the Supreme Court and, of course, the White House

bully pulpit itself, George W. Bush has certainly had an awful lot of

explaining to do lately.

With all the power at his disposal, starting with a knee-jerk

legislature all too ready to follow his lead, lock, stock and barrel,

the President should not have to constantly redefine his mission and

America's. That is exactly what he has done and what he is doing.

Before the war, he offered only a strained rationale as to why we

needed to attack Iraq. First, it was getting rid of Iraq's weapons of

mass destruction. Then the rationale was deposing a dictator who

provided refuge to al Qaeda, and finally, it became spreading liberty

throughout the Middle East.

Once things started to turn south, President Bush redefined what he

meant when he declared only a

year into the war. Now he is redefining what it means to be in a civil

war.

Mr. Speaker, let us be perfectly clear. Iraq is not in danger of

falling into a civil war. The country is in the very throes of a civil

war conflict as we speak. Some people have this false notion that an

Iraqi civil war would resemble two sides fighting and fighting it out

with antiquated rifles in a field that looks kind of like Gettysburg.

Unfortunately, the sectarian violence that currently plagues Iraq is

pretty similar in appearance and scope to the Lebanese civil war fought

in the 1970s and 1980s. Then, like now, religion was manipulated to

encourage fighting among different sects. Alliances shift rapidly so

that no one ever really knows who is on their side and who is not; and

worst of all, innocents are killed on a nearly daily basis as a result

of the infighting.

As if the failure to acknowledge what is really happening in Iraq was

not bad enough, only a week ago, the President attempted his most

strained leap of logic yet. During a press conference, which, by the

way, after 6 years in office he is finally conducting with regularity,

the President stated that American military forces would remain in Iraq

until 2009, at the earliest, that another President would have to end

it.

After initially implying that the war would not cost much and would

not take long to fight, the President needs to explain to the American

people why the decision to bring our troops home from Iraq will, as he

says,

Mr. Speaker, given the current instability in Iraq, which 150,000

brave U.S. troops who have not been able to quell after more than 3

years of war, why in the world would we plan on American forces

remaining in Iraq until 2009? It

seems like the President is trying, yet again, to redefine the mission

to his satisfaction.

Well, you cannot redefine the facts, Mr. Speaker. There is no way to

paper over the hundreds of Iraqi civilians who are being brutally

murdered in sectarian violence. There is no way to disguise the nearly

2,500 American troops who have lost their lives in this war or the over

15,000 who have been forever injured.

Yet, none of these tragic losses have made either the United States

or Iraq safer from the threat of terrorism. The tragic irony is that

the war has actually made Iraq a haven for international terrorism.

It is time for the President to stop trying to redefine reality. It

is time to define something constructive for the American people. It is

time we plan how we will bring our troops home.