Mr. Speaker, Members, last Friday, Retired Lieutenant

General Ricardo Sanchez, who led U.S. forces in Iraq following the

invasion in

2003, became the latest in a growing list of retired military officers

who harshly criticize the war in Iraq. He said that the United States

is General Sanchez also

lambasted the latest strategy in Iraq calling it, again

These startling revelations from the highest ranks of our military

should shake us to our very core. The man who was personally

responsible for conducting the war in Iraq is trying to convince us

that we should have no faith in the administration now waging the war.

General Sanchez went on to say,

and that

But, General Sanchez, how can the American people hold their elected

officials accountable? As we all know, they can make a lot of noise by

calling congressional offices, writing letters, and attending marches;

but at the end of the day, the American people hold their elected

officials accountable at the ballot box.

To my colleagues in the House of Representatives, our constituents

have already made up their minds. An overwhelming majority of people

think it was a mistake to invade Iraq and believe that setting a

timetable for withdrawal is the correct course of action. Most

Democrats and Republicans agree that an open-ended occupation of Iraq

is an awful idea. But the Iraqi people don't want us there, and we have

no timetable for withdrawal.

What do we have if not an open-ended occupation? What more do we need

to learn before deciding that this war must be brought to a halt? Day

after day, the grim realities unfolding in Iraq paint a picture of

futility and mismanagement. More lives are lost, more money is

squandered, and Iraq falls deeper and deeper into chaos and civil war.

President Bush has had our military in pursuit of a victory that is

perpetually Well, we have been around the

corner and back again. There is no victory to be found. The time to end

this debacle has long since passed. The United States military presence

has reinforced in the minds of the Iraqis the most damaging lesson an

emerging nation can learn: that problems are solved with bullets and

bombs instead of compromise and cooperation. Instead of encouraging

compromise and fostering cooperation among the various warring tribes,

we have done the exact opposite. We continue to spend billions of

dollars blindly arming Iraqis who volunteer to serve in the Iraqi

security forces with no thought as to where their loyalties might lie

when we hand them weapons.

On one hand, as Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and

International Studies points out, we have not addressed the degree to

which all elements of the Iraqi security forces, from the Prime

Minister's office down, have links to Shiite efforts to retain and

expand power and carry out sectarian cleansing in mixed areas.

On the other hand, the bottom-up reconciliation that Bush brags about

is arming and empowering the Sunni militias in Anbar province and

elsewhere. This is, as a recent article in the Economist suggests, a

recipe for civil war and only serves to undermine the central

government of Iraq.

These irresponsible and dangerous tactics not only harm future

prospects for stability in Iraq, but seriously erode our standing in

the Middle East and larger international community.

I would like to commend General Sanchez for speaking out against the

Bush administration. But how many more General Sanchezes will it take

before the last Congressperson turns against the occupation of Iraq?

How many more investigations of Blackwater's abuse, of Halliburton's

fraud, how many more reports of our overstretched military at its

breaking point, or about the damage our occupation is doing to our

international standing? How much more of this debate do we need before

our national leaders accept that the Iraq war is actually making our

country less safe?

For the good of this great Nation and for the good of Iraq, it is

time to bring our troops home and end the occupation of Iraq.

Mr. Speaker and Members, I know that there is an attempt to put a

good face on the surge and to try and make us believe that the surge is

working, but just read your newspapers every day and see the number of

lives that are being lost, not only of our own soldiers, but of the

Iraqis.