Good evening, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday, I had the

unfortunate occasion to attend the funeral of Sergeant Princess

Samuels, age 22, a graduate of Flowers High School in my district and

one of the most recent casualties of our misadventure in Iraq.

I rise today to comment on what I consider to be a failed policy in

Iraq, because she is only one of over 3,700 American soldiers who have

been killed in Iraq. Meanwhile, 27,000 U.S. troops have been wounded in

action, 12,000 of whom will not be able to return to action, and

although we don't comment on it often, at least 50,000 Iraqis have been

killed; 18,000 Iraqi civilians were killed in August alone.

It was very sad to be with the family of Sergeant Princess Samuels.

Her mother, in an understandable note of bitterness, said that here she

found herself prepared for a funeral while the Commander in Chief was

preparing for a wedding for his daughter. Her anger was certainly

understandable, and our sympathies and those of all us in the Fourth

Congressional District go out to Ms. Samuels.

So I find it very unfortunate that we begin to hear comments such as

This

is the wrong course. This is the wrong course. We need to stay engaged,

but we need to move away from this military course.

Our troops have fought valiantly and they have done everything we

have asked of them. They have done more. But, right now, the GAO report

tells us that the strategy is flawed. You see, the strategy was to have

a surge that would allow this government some breathing room, and in

that breathing room they would have a reconciliation and begin to bring

the various sectarian groups in Iraq together.

What we found from the GAO report is that that hasn't happened. The

surge has only provided the illusion of progress. That is, if you put

more troops in, you will reduce the casualties among those troops. But

the fact is, the overall level of violence continues to be very high.

The number of Iraqis killed remains about the same.

Now, last January the President laid out some benchmarks. He said

that these ought to be completed, and this is why we are having the

surge. The GAO report says only three of the 18 benchmarks have been

met. Do the math: that means 15 have not been met.

These are not benchmarks that U.S. troops, no matter how valiant, can

achieve. These are political benchmarks that this Iraqi Government has

failed to achieve. The number of daily attacks over the last 6 months

is about the same. In fact, the number of Iraqi army units capable of

independent operation has actually decreased. And what we find is

insurgents frequently work with the Iraqi police and military forces

based on common sectarian ties.

There is an interesting article in The Washington Post today. Our

U.S. troops are pinned down in a section of west Baghdad and they are

calling for relief from Iraqi troops. The relief did not come. Why?

Because the Iraqi troops were in league with the Shiite militia in that

area and they did not respond. Fortunately, our American troops were

able to reach cover and survive, but the story illustrates another

failure that is occurring in Iraq as the so-called security forces that

we are trying to prop up were in fact working with our enemies. The

policy is not working.

We can't continue this policy. We need a new direction. We need to

look to diplomacy as a way to resolve this problem. People say, well,

if we withdraw U.S. troops, there is going to be a blood bath. There is

a bloodbath now.

The fact of the matter is if U.S. troops withdraw, one of the major

catalysts for violence will be removed from the situation. We will then

be in a position to support diplomatic efforts, peace initiatives by

Muslim countries, by the U.N., by internationally recognized military

leaders. Sometimes this country has an arrogance and believes that we

are the only ones that can promote peace. I disagree. I believe that

other countries, Muslim countries, other people can also promote peace.

And I also believe that they want peace, and given supportive

conditions, they can in fact create peace.

I think we have to accept the fact that the surge gives an illusion

of success, but the overall policy has not worked, because the GAO

reported the benchmarks haven't been met, and it is time to move in a

new direction. I also noted today the British, our allies in this

adventure, have already begun to leave Basra, leaving the cities in the

hands of the Iraqi security.

The point is, everyone but this administration realizes we need a new

direction. I hope the administration will look at the GAO report and

conclude, as it has, that this policy is a failure and that we need a

new policy in Iraq.