Mr. Speaker, there is a great deal of spin coming from

the White House on why America needs to stay the course in Iraq, and

why we must keep the surge going on and on and on, on how victory is

near if we simply escalate the number of troops we have in this region

of Iraq or another region of Iraq.

Enough, Mr. Speaker, enough. It seems the President hasn't read his

own National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq. If he had, he would find a

grim picture of the political and security reality in Iraq, one quite

different from his own.

Let me read just a few conclusions from this August 23 report:

One, the level of overall violence, including attacks on and

casualties among civilians, remains high; Iraq's sectarian groups

remain unreconciled; al Qaeda in Iraq retains the ability to conduct

high-profile attacks; and to date, Iraqi political leaders remain

unable to govern effectively.

Two, population displacement resulting from sectarian violence

continues, imposing burdens on provincial governments and some

neighboring states and increasing the danger of destabilizing

influences spreading across Iraq's borders over the next 6 to 12

months.

Three, broadly accepted political compromises required for sustained

security, long-term political progress and economic development are

unlikely to emerge unless there is a fundamental shift in the factors

driving Iraqi political and security developments.

Mr. Speaker, just the first few pages of the NIE on Iraq should

concern everyone. Also on the President's reading list should be the

August 30 draft GAO report on Iraq, which also paints a very

pessimistic picture of Iraq. It concludes that Iraq has failed to meet

all but three of the 18 required benchmarks for political and military

progress. Rather than embrace these nonpartisan findings, the White

House has actually denounced the GAO report for holding Iraq to too

high a set of standards.

Mr. Speaker, while the White House speaks of how violence has been

reduced in Baghdad, it ignores how the number of Iraqi civilian deaths

across the country rose by about 20 percent in July. This is not the

time to paint rosy scenarios and declare victory is at hand if only

Congress coughs up another $200 billion to cover the costs of the war

over the next few months.

Mr. Speaker, the President and we in Congress must face the facts. We

need a plan on how to leave Iraq in a safe and orderly manner in 2008.

We need the President to meet with congressional leaders and map out a

concrete plan for how to draw down our forces and leave Iraq over the

next 9 to 12 months. It can be done, and it must be done.

We can redeploy troops to Kuwait in the surrounding region. We can

safeguard the Kurdish north. We can redeploy troops to Afghanistan. And

we can bring troops home to their families, friends and communities. We

need the Pentagon to provide a realistic plan for withdrawal, one that

is logistically sound and can be achieved over the next year.

President Bush, with great fanfare, recently invoked the Vietnam

analogy to support our continued escalation in Iraq. If anything,

Vietnam and Iraq prove that wars are a lot easier to get into than out

of. If we want to avoid the haste, confusion and humiliation of our

final departure from Vietnam, a withdrawal that occurred almost

entirely without planning and hurt U.S. military prestige more than any

other single action, then we must plan now for our departure from Iraq.

If we fail to plan and control the safe and orderly withdrawal of our

forces, then we will surely fail our troops once again, holding them

hostage to events on the ground beyond their control.

The administration lacked a plan for what to do in Iraq the day after

the fall of Saddam Hussein. We must not repeat that mistake when it

comes to the welfare and the safety of our troops as they leave Iraq.

For far too long, Congress failed to live up to its responsibilities.

We must not continue to send blank checks to the White House.

Mr. Speaker, this House should not consider the President's

supplemental request until we come to an agreement with him on how to

bring our troops home in a safe, orderly and timely way.

Let me be clear. This means we should not consider on the floor of

this House any additional funding for this war until we have a plan to

end it.

As The New York Times stated last Friday,

We don't need more spin, Mr. Speaker. What we need is a plan to end

the war in Iraq, and we need it now.