Mr. Speaker today we mourn the death of

the 2,500th American soldier in Iraq and are disgusted by the headline

in yesterday's Washington Post stating, ``Iraq Amnesty Plan May Cover

Attacks on U.S. Military.'' With another American soldier killed and

the news of Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki seeking amnesty for

insurgents who have killed and maimed U.S. troops, this House debates

H. Res. 861, a meaningless, nonbinding Republican resolution that is a

political document designed as a partisan campaign ploy, not a serious

attempt to address the failings and mismanagement of this disastrous

Iraq policy. Our troops in Iraq are in harm's way, they are sacrificing

tremendously for all Americans and the Iraqi people, and this

Republican Congress honors their sacrifice with a farcical debate--it

is shameful.

A majority of Americans know that the Bush administration's Iraq

policy is strategically bankrupt and it has put U.S. troops in the

untenable position of refereeing an Iraqi civil war. It is a policy

that has made America less safe and more at risk in a dangerous world.

Earlier this week President Bush returned from a 5-hour visit to

Baghdad and said, ``I sense something different happening in Iraq.''

This profoundly unenlightened observation after 5 hours inside the

safety of the ``green zone'' contrasts with U.S. troops who are on

their third tour of duty in the midst of a chaotic, deadly and

deteriorating civil war. This White House has made ``victory'' the

basis for an end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq, but the only exit

strategy this president has thus far developed was his own--for his

departure from Baghdad after only 5 hours.

Outside of the safety and security of Baghdad's ``green zone,'' there

is ``something different happening'' and U.S. troops are surrounded by

it--the depravity and brutality of an Iraqi civil war. Murderous

militias, government sponsored death squads, paramilitary brigades,

insurgents and organized criminals who kidnap and kill children--these

are the forces that control neighborhoods, rule the streets and are on

the payroll of Iraq's Ministry of the Interior.

Let me cite a May 7, 2006 article from the Los Angeles Times to

underscore how different Iraq is today, ``More Iraqi civilians were

killed in Baghdad during the first 3 months of this year than in any

time since the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime--at least 3,800,

many of them found hogtied and shot execution-style. Others were

strangled, electrocuted, stabbed, garroted or hanged. Some died in

bombings. Many bore signs of torture such as bruises, drill holes, burn

marks, gouged eyes or severed limbs.''

This horrific depravity does not reflect a global war on terror, it

is a civil war and American troops have no business separating

religious groups determined to kill each other in order to settle old

scores or accumulate political power. ``Now the killings are

systematic, personal. Masked gunman storm into houses, and the

victims--the majority of them Sunnis--are never seen alive. Such

killings now claim nine times more lives than car bombings, according

to figures provided by a high-ranking U.S. military official, who

released them only on the condition of anonymity,'' the same Los

Angeles Times article states.

Is this the vital American interest for which 2,500 Americans have

given their lives? If we don't stop these barbarous murders in Iraq

does it really mean they will then bring their torture and executions

to America's towns and neighborhoods as the Republican scare tactics

purport? Of course not; this simple-minded ``fight them over there so

we don't have to fight them here'' Republican rhetoric reflects their

blindness to the real situation on the ground in Iraq. Iraq's endless

domestic atrocities and brutality is their domestic tragedy, not a

global phenomenon, but the Republicans are more interested in using

this argument in their political campaigns than they are in bringing

our troops home from this civil war safely.

We know that President Bush's stated premise for the war in Iraq,

weapons of mass destruction, was a fabrication and a deceptive

exaggeration. But is it now the duty of U.S. soldiers to police the

death-squads that are operating within the Iraqi police and committing

gross human rights violations? Is it the duty of our brave troops to

disarm Shiite militias that are extensions of the Iraqi Government and

responsible for imposing religious law and hunting down violators of

their sect of faith? Absolutely not.

The mantra from President Bush and the Republican Congress is ``stay

the course.'' It is an outrageous and irrational strategy that reflects

the bankruptcy and myopic nature of this administration's assessment of

the situation inside Iraq. An occupied Iraq will keep U.S. troops as

targets of Iraq's nationalist insurgents and never allow that country

to escape the current security crisis, political crisis and financial

crisis. Only if this occupation ends is Iraq capable of truly being a

sovereign nation that is responsible for its own problems and future.

Instead of allowing Iraq to determine its own destiny, President Bush

has made an indefinite U.S. military commitment to Iraq, almost,

assuring tens of thousands of additional U.S. soldiers will be sent to

confront Iraq's problems. Since U.S. forces are in the fourth year of a

war that was intended to last only months and the concept of a

U.S. victory over all the various factions of murderers, criminals and

armed insurgents is delusional, one can only surmise that U.S. troops

will be in Iraq when the Bush administration leaves office in January

2009. For this reason, Congress needs to dictate a clear position that

will allow for the redeployment of U.S. troops within the region to

defend U.S. interests and refocus our attention to the war on

terrorism. This will allow for a restoration of Iraqi sovereignty and

the opportunity for Iraqis to determine their own future.

The Bush administration's mismanagement of its Iraq policy from a

military and geopolitical perspective is only exacerbated by the

tremendous investment of U.S. tax dollars that have yielded such

unremarkable results. To date, more than $320 billion has been borrowed

and spent in Iraq. Every single dollar has been added to our Nation's

national debt with the burden for the financial cost of this war on the

backs of all of our children and the grandchildren, including those of

the very soldiers who are now fighting and sacrificing in Iraq. Image,

this Congress and White House have looked the other way as almost $9

billion has simply disappeared into a system in which corruption is

endemic and financial mismanagement the norm. Every American should

feel betrayed by this Congress and its

disregard for oversight and accountability with regard to the hard-

earned tax dollars of U.S. citizens.

As Americans fight and die in Iraq and Americans pay hundreds of

billions of dollars for this war, it is remarkable to hear the words of

Iraq's Prime Minister al-Maliki. President Bush earlier this week, in a

moment of poetry, looked into the prime minister's eyes. It was unclear

what the president saw, but we do know the words the prime minister has

used on June 1, 2006 to describe U.S. troops when he said, ``They

(troops in the American led coalition) crush them (Iraqi civilians)

with their vehicles and kill them just on suspicion. This is completely

unacceptable.'' The Prime Minister called the U.S. violence against

Iraqis a ``daily phenomenon.'' Now, President Bush's soul-mate wants to

provide amnesty for those who murdered and maimed as many as 20,000

U.S. troops. Is this why the Republicans in Congress want to stay the

course in Iraq?

Mr. Speaker, there is a civil war--a 21st Century civil war--raging

in Iraq. It is based on religion and historical events that can never

be remedied by 130,000 U.S. troops whether they remain as an occupying

force for 1 more year or 50 years. What we have achieved in Iraq is

certain. The end of Saddam's regime, three elections, an Iraqi

constitution, a new permanent government and the training of more than

250,000 Iraq security forces are the frequently stated highlights of

this war. These achievements are the sole result of U.S. troops and

their sacrifice and bravery. Yet, this mission is confronting a reality

that is darker and much more ominous in large part because this ill-

conceived pre-emptive war has unleashed forces that are beyond the

control of U.S. troops that are antithetical to U.S. interests.

On May 26, 2006, Tom Lasseter reported for Knight Ridder that

``Southern Iraq, long touted as a peaceful region that's likely to be

among the first areas returned to Iraqi control, is now dominated by

Shiite Muslim warlords and militiamen who are laying the groundwork for

an Islamic fundamentalist government, say senior British and Iraqi

officials in the area.''

Even with 130,000 U.S. troops and thousands more from coalition

partners, Iraq is not on a path that will yield a free, democratic

state in the Middle East. The occupation has cleared the way for the

establishment of a theocratic order that will ensure clerics and

militiamen dictate obedience to religious law--Sharia law--with

absolutely zero tolerance for any form of pluralism. The current

situation in Basra only highlights the incomprehensible ignorance of

the designers of U.S. Iraq policy to consider the powerful cultural and

religious forces the U.S. invasion of Iraq unleashed. Tragically, the

2,500 U.S. troops who have been killed, the almost 20,000 who have been

wounded and the tens of thousands of Iraqi women, children and men who

have been killed--often times brutally--have suffered the consequences

of President Bush's Iraq policy.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 861 purposely avoids the dangerous reality and

dismisses the tremendous challenges confronting U.S. troops in Iraq and

America's real challenges with regard to terrorism and extremist

threats. This resolution is a dishonest attempt to inject raw politics

into a congressional debate that will do nothing to keep America secure

or bring U.S. troops home safe and soon. As we look to the future, my

intention is to continue to support a comprehensive strategy to combat

terrorism, keep America secure from real strategic threats and to

redeploy U.S. troops from Iraq's civil war. All Americans support our

troops, but it is time for Congress to support a policy that ensures

U.S. troops have an exit strategy from Iraq. This resolution should be

defeated and I will vote against it.