Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts. An

issue I would like to address tonight is perhaps one of the most

important ones. Of course, we all share the gentleman's admiration for

our troops. I heard of a young man from Ohio who will be going back in

a month or so for his fourth tour of duty in Iraq, so not only our

admiration for our personnel there, but their whole families who are

contributing to this effort, and it has been very, very difficult for

them as well.

But I want to talk about how we can eventually be in a position to be

able to bring our sons and daughters home, and that involves fulfilling

an activity that might seem obvious to anyone who has thought about

this, but, unfortunately, has not been fulfilled by the administration,

and that is that we need to replace American troops with Iraqis.

We need to get our sons and daughters home and their responsibility

for the security of Iraq needs to be assumed by Iraqis who will stand

up and toe the line for their countries. And until that happens, we are

going to continue to see the enormous losses that are being suffered by

the Iraqis and our sons and daughters now.

And the reason I want to address this, and perhaps it seems obvious

when I say that, but I wanted to share tonight the abject failure of

the administration to do the very obvious things that need to be done

to train the Iraqi security forces. It is obvious in this country that

we need larger number of troops in the security forces now and in the

future to allow the withdrawal of American troops. But we have found

after doing an examination of what the civilian planners, and this is

not a criticism of the military personnel because frankly it is the

civilian personnel, from the Secretary of Defense up through the

President, who have dropped the ball unfortunately, and what is

required to train these Iraqi troops.

Four months ago an assessment showed that we had less than 40 percent

of the training personnel that was anticipated to be in Iraq 6 months

after the collapse of the Iraqi Army, less than half of the training

personnel were there several months ago. And the result has been a

spectacular failure to train and equip and stand up an Iraqi Army.

I remember the first time I ever heard the term stand up. It was from

Secretary Rumsfeld. And he said we are going to stand up the Iraqi

Army. This is before the war started. This army cannot get on its knees

in Iraq right now.

Now, we have been told by the administration that there are 170,000

troops in Iraq. Well, there are 170,000 names on paper, and maybe there

are 170,000 boots, but at most, at most, being generous, there are

three battalions that can actually go out there and provide security in

Iraq, less than 20,000 people. This army is a paper machet force and

we, the administration, has not provided the infrastructures needed to

train it.

Now why have they not done that? Why you would think immediately

after the collapse of the Iraq Army, of course it did not help that the

administration made what appears to be a major tactical blunder, which

was to disband the Iraqi Army in the first place, without any security

in Iraq to replace it, which led to this horrendous looting, if you

will recall, looting that everyone predicted except the civilian

leadership of the military here, knowing the history of Iraq, the

violence in the ethnic groups. The fact that no security was supplied

after the collapse of the Iraqi Army has put us behind the 8 ball.

In any event. At that point you would think the administration would

push the alarm button to say we are going to speed forward as far as we

possibly can to train and equip the Iraqi Army. Boy, were we wrong. In

fact, it is this bad. In this chamber, when the defense bill came to

the floor here the week before last for the appropriations bill, the

majority party had put in a limitation on what could be spent to train

the Iraqi military force. Now, it seems to me that ought to be the

place we should not be scrimping money. We should not be trying to

artificially limit. That is the place we should put the pedal to the

metal and train these forces to replace our sons and daughters as soon

as humanly possible. Now fortunately we passed an amendment that lifted

that cap. I brought an amendment. I appreciate the Chair accepted it,

and we actually got rid of that limitation. But this has been one of a

long train of failures that follows from a fundamental misapprehension

of the situation. And all of these mistakes that we have talked about

flow from one basic misunderstanding by this administration, and that

was the assumption that they made, that they could put on rose colored

glasses and Baghdad would look like Paris in 1944 and the Shiias and

the Sunnis would break bread together and sing Kumbaya and democracy

would flower without standing up an Iraqi Army, without having

security, without having armored HUMVEES, without having flak jackets

for our troops, without having a provision for the National Guard,

which is now so extented that the governors now, you know, the

governors had a meeting just this week saying how are we going to fight

our fires this summer when the National Guard is not here. This has

been a continuation of the rose colored glasses syndrome that has now

resulted in a continued failure to stand up an Iraqi Army.

I just want to say that, you know, that is history. It is

important to review. But the present and the future are disconcerting

now too. For instance, we now know that we have this paper machet force

in Iraq, and that is all it is, to provide security.

And until it becomes real, it is going to be difficult to get our

troops home.

But even today, this administration, because they are so wedded to

this go it alone policy, has rejected offers from adjoining nations in

the region to train these Iraqi troops. Egypt, we are told, has made a

specific proposal to train Iraqi troops to expedite that process so we

can replace our people and get our people home and replace them with

Iraqis. And this administration, because of their go it alone attitude

has rejected that offer of other people in the region to train these

forces.