Mr. Speaker, I did not see any purple fingers in this

Chamber so far this week. We all remember how the Iraqi elections in

January were hailed by the President's supporters as the turning point

in Iraq.

Well, now there has been another election, a referendum on the

Constitution. And what we are hearing from the pro-war forces is that

we are still in for a long and deadly occupation in Iraq.

It was all going to be so simple, remember? We would march into

Baghdad and depose Saddam Hussein. The grateful Iraqis would embrace

the American presence, and a glorious democracy would spontaneously

bloom. The Iraq situation was often compared to Germany and Japan after

World War II where we were able to quickly fashion functioning

democracy.

The New York Times cites Richard Armitage, Bush's former deputy

Secretary of State, who notes that those were homogeneous societies,

whereas Iraq is a patchwork of rival ethnic groups. Armitage also

points out that Germany and Japan, in 1945, were cowed populations,

exhausted and deeply shocked by the war.

Iraqis, however, were unshocked and unawed. They simply want their

country back. So 2\1/2\ years and 2,000 body bags later, we are

spinning our wheels and the President who drove us into this ditch in

the first place has no plan for getting us out.

Instead, according to a New York Times article on Monday, he seems to

be preparing us for, and I quote, ``a struggle of Cold War

proportions.'' Does that mean we can look forward to a half century of

American boots on the ground in Iraq?

One of the President's aids says in the article that this is a

struggle of ideologies that is not going to end with one election or

one constitution, or even a string of elections. Is this what the

American people signed up for, a titanic ideological struggle with no

end in sight? No, they were told Saddam Hussein had to be removed

because he had deadly weapons pointed at American cities.

As he has repeated over the last few years, the President is mixing

apples and oranges. The President is saying that there is a threat of

Islamic terrorism which is real and must be addressed, and that is

true. Though I would argue we need to use more diplomatic and fewer

military tools in that struggle.

Then there is the war in Iraq, which is and was not a country of

Islamic terrorists until we actually invaded that area and actually

inflamed Muslim extremists and served as a recruiting tool for al

Qaeda.

In a twisted way it turns out that the Bush administration was right.

You cannot separate Iraq from the war on terrorism. What they did not

tell us is that invading Iraq has helped the wrong side of the war on

terrorism.

That same Times article quotes Kenneth Pollack, a scholar who

initially supported the Iraq invasion. Pollack now says, and I quote

him, ``The theory that democracy is the antidote to insurgency gets

disproven on the ground every day.''

So if we cannot defeat the insurgents by continuing to hold

elections, what can we do? There is only one answer. We can take away

the one thing that animates the insurgency in the first place, that is,

our perceived military occupation of Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I traveled to Iraq a few weeks ago to meet with our

military and to learn more about their mission. I cannot tell you how

impressed I was with their courage, their loyalty, their intelligence.

From the officers down to the citizen soldiers of the National Guard,

they are indeed the best America has to offer.

Unfortunately, they have been let down by their civilian superiors

who

sent them to Iraq on false pretenses, on a poorly defined mission,

without all of the tools they needed, and without a plan to get them

out of there.

Our soldiers deserve better. They deserve a clear strategy from their

President. They deserve a one-way ticket back home.