Mr. Speaker, President Bush has recently indicated that

he will ask Congress to approve another supplemental appropriations

bill to fund the ongoing military operations in Iraq. The number is

rumored to be somewhere in the $80 billion range; $80 billion.

If this request for emergency funds is anything like the last three

passed in the Congress, we can expect two things: one, the President

will once again refuse to explain precisely where this money will be

spent; and, two,

congressional Republicans will meekly accede to the President's demands

without asking for even the slightest degree of accountability from the

White House in return.

We in Congress must do more than just rubber stamp the President's

every last wish. We hold the power of the purse; and, accordingly, we

must exercise our constitutional authority to hold the executive branch

accountable. Up to now, the Congress has failed to hold the Bush

administration accountable for the many mishaps and mistakes in Iraq;

and, as a result, the Members of Congress, all 535 of us, are

responsible for the nearly 1,500 American troops who have been

needlessly killed in Iraq, not to mention the 11,000 Americans who have

been forever wounded and the untold thousands of Iraqi civilians who

have died in this war.

Before appropriating a single dollar for the Iraq war, more than we

have already appropriated, Congress must demand that President Bush and

Secretary Rumsfeld tell Congress exactly what they plan to do to

address the growing crisis in Iraq. Demanding accountability from the

Bush administration crosses over political lines because it is about

more than just politics. It is about taking care of our men and women

who are serving in Iraq, and it is about advancing policies that will

secure America for the future.

Together, with 27 of my House colleagues, I have introduced House

Concurrent Resolution 35, an Iraq withdrawal plan, that has four

components. President Bush needs to address, at the very least, each of

these important components before Congress provides him any further

funds for Iraq.

First, the President needs to begin the process of bringing our

troops home. How can we possibly ask these brave men and women, who

have selflessly answered the call of duty for their country, to

continue to die for an unjust, unfair, and poorly planned military

failure halfway across the world? These are the troops the

administration assured us would be embraced as liberators, but who

continue to be the focal point of anti-American extremism, leaving them

like sitting ducks.

In fact, I believe the insurgency in Iraq is fueled primarily by our

military presence. Ceasing the military operations will not be

sufficient to defeat the insurgency, no way, but staying will continue

to intensify it, and that is for certain.

Second, President Bush needs to develop and implement a plan for

Iraq's civil and economic infrastructure. The U.S. has a moral

responsibility to clean up the mess we made in Iraq, but that

responsibility needs to be fulfilled not by our military but by

humanitarian groups and companies that will help rebuild Iraq's

infrastructure; and all future investments must be made with the needs

of Iraqis being paramount, not the United States Government contractors

and other war profiteers.

Third, the President must convene an emergency meeting of Iraq's

leadership, Iraq's neighbors, and the United Nations to create an

international peacekeeping force in Iraq and to replace U.S. military

forces with Iraqi police and national guard forces to ensure Iraq's

security. With Iraq's security problems the most serious cause for

concern in the country at the moment, an international peacekeeping

force in place of the U.S. military would better serve Iraq's needs.

An international peacekeeping force, supported by Iraq's neighbors

and the United Nations, would provide real legitimacy to a conflict

that has flown in the face of international law from the very

beginning.

Finally, the President must take all steps to provide the Iraqi

people the opportunity to control their internal affairs. The Iraqi

people cannot truly control their own affairs until the U.S. military

has ceded back authority to the Iraqi people. That is why it is

essential for Iraq's police and national guard forces to manage Iraq's

security, not the American military.