Mr. Speaker, tonight members of the Congressional Black

Caucus stand with the American people to tell the President once more:

it is time to end the war in Iraq. As co-chairs of the Out of Iraq

Caucus, two of my fellow CBC members, Representatives Maxine Waters and

Barbara Lee, are among the preeminent leaders in Congress in the fight

to end this misbegotten war. I want to thank them for their leadership

and for their tireless efforts to bring our troops home.

Last week's much-anticipated testimony, report and ``new plan'' were

just more of the same. Once again refusing to heed the facts on the

ground and the wishes of the American people, President Bush simply

reiterated his

stubborn commitment to continue his failed policy in Iraq.

The ``progress'' reported by the Administration is arguable. But what

is not subject to debate is this: there is no such thing as ``winning''

an occupation. We cannot have a military ``victory'' in Iraq. The only

way out of this quagmire is a political solution. And after more than

four years, there has been no political progress in Iraq. The President

seems to believe that another 10 years of occupation, to the tune of

trillions of dollars and thousands more American lives, is worth

wagering on this disastrous conflict. The American people and the

Congressional Black Caucus disagree.

The White House and its emissaries continue to urge the Congress and

the American people to view the disastrous conflict in Iraq through

rose-colored glasses. But we know better. No independent assessment of

the situation in Iraq aligns with the picture presented by the White

House. The Government Accountability Office reports that the Iraqi

government has failed to meet 15 of the 18 benchmarks for success in

Iraq as articulated by the President himself. The Jones Commission

concludes that the Iraqi National Police force that we have spent

millions of dollars training and equipping is `dysfunctional,' riddled

with sectarianism, corruption and inefficiency, and should be disbanded

altogether. The consensus of the nation's intelligence community, in

the latest National Intelligence Estimate, is that the `level of

overall violence, including attacks on and casualties among civilians

remains high' and `Iraq's sectarian groups remain unreconciled.'

Furthermore, the Administration's use of statistics to reinforce its

claims of success is problematic. According to a report in the

Washington Post, U.S. military leaders and the White House are `cherry-

picking' data to bolster their claims that the President's failed war

strategy is working. In order to support this claim, military and

Administration calculations are based on a system of categorizing and

excluding statistics that `selectively ignored negative trends' and

`puzzled' senior intelligence officials and the nation's chief auditor

and head of the Government Accountability Office. For example, people

who were killed by a shot to the back of the head are included as

`sectarian' casualties, but those killed by a shot to the front of the

head are not counted because they are assumed to be dead from

`criminal' activity, according to an intelligence analyst quoted in the

article.

In fact, the death toll in Iraq is rising. The Associated Press

reports that while the President's escalation has succeeded in bringing

violence in Baghdad down from peak levels, the death toll from

sectarian attacks around the country is running nearly double the pace

from a year ago. The AP counted 1,809 civilian deaths in August, making

it the highest monthly total this year. Though the administration

continually cites a reduction in violence in Anbar province as evidence

of the surge's success, in fact, the Marines had already established

ties to local Sunni leaders long before the `surge' strategy was even

announced. June, July and August 2007 marked the bloodiest summer so

far for U.S. troops in Iraq, with 264 soldiers killed.

This grim picture is further reflected in Iraqi public opinion. A

BBC/ABC News poll conducted in August concludes that Iraqi opinion is

at its gloomiest since the polls began in February 2004. According to

this latest poll, between 67 and 70 percent of Iraqis say the

escalation has made things worse in the key areas of security, the

conditions for political dialogue, reconstruction and economic

development. A majority (57 percent) of Iraqis believe that attacks on

coalition forces are acceptable, including 93 percent of Sunnis and 50

percent of Shia.

The token drawdown of troops proposed by General Petraeus and

endorsed by the President, in which nearly a year would pass before

troop strength returns to pre-escalation levels, is neither a political

compromise nor a ``new plan.'' In fact, this drawdown has been

scheduled to take place since the beginning of the ``surge,'' because

to do otherwise would stretch our military beyond the breaking point.

So, in effect, the President is offering nothing at all in response to

the demand of the American people and the Congress to bring our troops

home--except another 10 years of war and occupation.

The President continues to ask our troops to referee a civil war

whose outcome depends entirely on the actions of politicians in

Baghdad. As General Petraeus himself has pointed out, the conflict in

Iraq cannot be solved militarily; only a political settlement by Iraq's

leaders can bring this conflict to an end. Yet, despite the fact that

Iraqi politicians have made virtually no progress toward this goal in

four years, the President insists on a continuing American military

involvement, with no end in sight. The American people understand that

this policy has failed, and this Congress will continue to fight to

bring an end to this disaster and to bring our troops home.