Mr. Speaker, it is time for Congress to take a good hard

look at the role the United States is playing in Iraq and whether it is

in our national interests to maintain a military presence there.

We need to acknowledge the fact that Iraq's insurgency is growing in

strength, not diminishing. It is the very presence of our 150,000-or-so

American troops in Iraq that unites the growing collection of insurgent

forces.

Since our military presence encourages further fighting, this war

will continue as long as the United States troops remain in Iraq,

appearing to be occupiers of their country. That is why Congress must

accept that we cannot possibly be successful through military means

alone.

During consideration of the defense authorization bill on May 25 for

fiscal year 2006, I offered an amendment urging the President to

develop a plan for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq. Surprisingly,

this is the first time the House formally debated the possibility of

withdrawal from Iraq, and that was over a 2-year period. While my

amendment was defeated, it is clear that Congress is starting to get

serious about the need to end the war in Iraq. 128 Members, including

five Republicans, voted for this important amendment, but there is much

more work to be done.

The Iraq war has now raged on for more than 2 years, and we are no

closer

to winning this conflict than we were when President Bush declared an

end to major combat operations under an arrogant banner declaring

``Mission Accomplished.''

Despite this lack of progress, the war has exacted a deeply troubling

human and financial toll. In just over 2 years of war, almost 1,800

American soldiers and an estimated 25,000 innocent Iraqi bystanders

have been killed. The Pentagon lists the number of Americans wounded as

over 12,000; but that does not take into consideration the invisible

wounds many of our soldiers have brought home, the painful mental

trauma they have contracted from months and years of fighting, watching

their friends being killed or wounded by the insurgents, and killing

and wounding others themselves, a lot to live with when they finally

come home.

When accounting for these psychological injuries, the number of

wounded jumps to more than 40,000 soldiers. Given what is at stake

here, do the American people not deserve a plan? Do our brave men and

women who are selflessly sacrificing their time and energy, not to

mention their arms, legs and lives for this war, not deserve a plan?

And it would be helpful for their families to know what the plan is in

Iraq.

We have asked the President to address Iraq's lack of security. We

have asked him to come up with a plan for ending the war. He has not;

so we will.

After we bring the troops home, we do have a plan. There is a plan.

It is a plan that would secure America for the future, the SMART

Security resolution, which I recently reintroduced with the support of

50 of my House colleagues. SMART is Sensible Multilateral American

Response to Terrorism for the 21st Century, and it will help address

the threats we face as a Nation. SMART Security will ensure America's

security by reaching out and engaging the Iraqi people.

Instead of rushing off to war for the wrong reasons, SMART Security

encourages the United States to work with other nations to address the

most pressing global problems. Because not every international problem

has a military answer, SMART Security will prevent terrorism by

addressing the very conditions that give rise to terrorism in the very

first place: poverty, despair, resource scarcity and lack of proper

education, as an example.

SMART Security also encourages democracy building, human rights

education, conflict resolution through nonmilitary means, educational

opportunities, and strengthening civil programs in the developing

world. These are the best ways to encourage democracy in countries like

Iraq, not through wars that cost thousands of unnecessary deaths and

cost billions of dollars. The SMART approach is the best way to reach

out to Iraq. It is time we stopped putting all of our eggs in the

military basket and started getting smart about our national security.