I thank the gentleman for yielding. I think many of us

find ourselves deeply distressed that we are here to talk about a so-

called week about the war on terrorism when we were promised months ago

by the majority leader a debate on Iraq.

There is a convergence here of themes that have been deeply

disappointing to me for well over the last 2 years, as I saw the

administration begin to use terms like the ``global war on terror'' to

begin to cover for what has clearly been a mistake in Iraq. I am here

tonight because I believe it is high time for a change of direction in

Iraq.

I honor the sacrifice of our fighting men and women and their

families. With 2,498 American deaths in Iraq today since the beginning

of the military operations, it is time that the Bush administration

finally levels with the American people. I think we first have to go

back to where, the beginning, to when, after the September 11 attacks

and after this House, Democrats, Republicans, along with the Senate and

the American people, agreed that we had to topple the government, the

Taliban government in Afghanistan that had harbored the al Qaeda

terrorists that had attacked us on September 11.

And after we took that government out and began to move that

operation

toward, hopefully, a successful Afghanistan, we began to hear the

drumbeat of talk out of the administration that Iraq was a big threat

to us, that we had mushroom clouds in our future, that this was a

country with a leader in Saddam Hussein who was an imminent threat to

the United States. Many of us in the post-September 11 time believed

that we had to do something more than just fly flights over Iraq and

deal with those issues that we had to really move and to do things to

create the kind of coalition of not only the willing but the capable

that we had when George Bush's father went after Saddam Hussein in the

first gulf war.

The real issue right now is what have we done in Iraq to make sure

that we can actually succeed. And I think that what we have,

unfortunately, has been a number of mistakes by the civilian leadership

in the Pentagon. We have heard them all before. The litany is long and

getting longer. It begins with not really understanding the context of

Iraq. It begins with not really understanding that we needed more

troops on the ground after we took Saddam Hussein's government down

than we actually need to do the taking down of the government.

It began with not really understanding the context and the construct

of those, the sects in Iraq and the enmity and the fear and the kind of

reprisals that you would see if the Sunni minority that had been in

power during the Saddam time actually had the Shiia come back into

power and realized how badly they had been treated for 25 years. We

have had multiple governments in Iraq, and this mission has morphed and

constantly been redefined by the administration to fit the latest

catastrophe.

What I really hope we can do over the next few days is have a

Democratic position begin to emerge. Our friends on the other side like

to talk about truth. And Daniel Patrick Moynihan did have that great

saying about people can have their own opinion, but they can't have

their own set of facts. Well, my grandmother from Ireland used to tell

me that saying it doesn't make it so. And what is really clear is that

we have to have a movement forward by this administration to not only

admit the mistakes that have been made, but to be sure that we actually

can bring our troops home sooner and safer. We want to honor the

sacrifice of our troops, but at the same time we want to bring them

home sooner and safer.

I am happy to yield to my colleague from New Jersey who is going to

continue this conversation, Mr. Andrews.