Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I

may consume.

This evening I come to the floor to continue the discussion that this

Congress has had with respect to our policies as it relates to Iraq.

I was fortunate this past weekend to attend yet another ceremony, in

this case, with the 1048th Tankers Division from the State of

Connecticut who was being deployed to Iraq.

We in this country continue to owe a great debt of gratitude to the

men and women who wear the uniform and who have served this country so

valiantly and with such courage. But we also owe a deep debt of

gratitude to their families in what has become gut-wrenching ceremonies

as you watch young children and mothers and grandparents say goodbye to

their loved ones who are going over to Iraq, including a mother who has

three sons that are now over there, and another mother who saw her son

off and her husband had just left the week before.

So it is very disconcerting when you find that the only people that

we have asked to make a sacrifice in the war on terror have become the

men and women who serve in the front lines and their families who are

left behind.

Our hearts go out to all of them. And what they deserve, more than

anything else, is a Nation that will level with them, that will provide

them with a plan, that will tell these troops, especially in the case

of the National Guard and the reservists who have been deployed,

redeployed, deployed again, their stays more so than at any other point

in the history of this country, and they do so with a salute and they

follow orders. How grateful a Nation we should be.

And yet here at home we hear, just in the previous hour, discussions

that center on a tax cut and how important a tax cut is. I have never

met anyone that didn't favor tax cuts. But it is disconcerting when you

look out at these families and you see that this Congress focuses on

tax cuts for the Nation's wealthiest 1 percent, making sure that we

ladle on more tax cuts to those already impoverished oil companies who

are experiencing unprecedented profits.

Yet I look out into that audience in Connecticut, in the State armory

and see these families, many who will struggle during this time, many

whose gas prices will rise during the time of this 18-month deployment.

So you say to yourself, well, where is the plan? What is the exit

strategy? What do we owe these individuals? Do we not at least owe them

the truth?

So there was a debate enjoined on this floor 2 weeks ago, a

nonbinding resolution, in essence, a conversation, a conversation where

99 percent of the people on the other side of the aisle said, stay the

course, while the Nation and while this side of the aisle clamors for a

new direction for America.

When I looked out into the eyes of the audience of those families and

I saw their concern and need, they want a new direction for the

country, especially as it relates to Iraq.

Isn't it amazing that they can get a plan from the Iraqi government,

that they can get several plans from Democrats, whether it be Jack

Murtha's bold plan that, well, seemingly the Iraqi government agrees

with, or whether it be Carl Levin's plan, well, that seemingly now

General Casey agrees with?

So we find the Pentagon and the Iraqi government, Jack Murtha, Carl

Levin, and several other Democrats offering thoughtful plans, and the

Republicans saying stay the course and a President still unable to

level with the American people and unwilling still to meet with parents

who have lost their kids, who line the highway on the way to Crawford,

Texas, or wait patiently outside The White House for an audience.

It amazes me that, while the Iraqis can say that they have a position

and they know that they have to take on responsibility, that we will

somehow let the Iraqis determine the faith of our brave men and women,

so much so that there has even been talk of amnesty, amnesty for those

who have killed, maimed or kidnapped American soldiers or citizens.

There can be no amnesty for that. There is no honor in the great

sacrifice that our men and women have provided. No matter what the

Iraqi government might say, we, as the United States Congress, have an

obligation to our men and women and the citizens that are in Iraq

working on behalf of this country to make sure that that cannot stand.

And what do we get from our erstwhile colleagues on the other side of

the aisle and why was this debate conducted in the manner that it was?

Well, let me tell you why. Because Karl Rove hatched a plan in New

Hampshire. You see, he went there and laid out this strategy; and the

strategy was a very simple one. It is one that they used before. They

just dusted off the playbook and said, you know, it works when we

attack Democrats. We attack them for their patriotism.

It worked successfully against Max Cleland. We were able to take that

man, who gave three of his limbs for this country, to make him appear

to be unpatriotic and go after him personally.

It worked against John Kerry. We were able to swift boat him during

the Presidential campaign, to tarnish his service and the medals he

earned.

And it is working against Jack Murtha, they think. So that we can

turn around and tarnish him as well.

And Karl Rove launches his strategy, and then John Boehner rolls out

the talking points for the caucus, and then the debate is neatly

sandwiched in between the time allotted, with no Democratic alternative

being allotted, and the White House picnic, just in time for the

President to take a surprise trip to Iraq for a photo-op and to return

home.

The Nation deserves better than that. If the Iraqi security advisors

can provide us with a plan, why can't Donald Rumsfeld provide us with a

plan?

No wonder, in the Washington Post today and the New York Times over

the weekend, people are wild over the fact that, if all that debate and

discussion was truly about a course for this Nation, how is it that

General Casey's plan sounds identical to Carl Levin's plan? And how is

it that the Iraqis can acknowledge what Mr. Murtha acknowledged last

November?

On this side of the aisle, we have come to know what it is all about.

It is about the continued hypocrisy as it relates to leveling with the

American people and, more importantly, leveling with our troops, with

the National Guard and reservists and their families and the kind of

sacrifice that we have asked them to do, and we have prevailed upon

them, and they have done

with honor. And yet we can't level with them?

We find ourselves right now with the congressional Republicans that

have no plan for Iraq, a flawed plan for going in, a failed plan to

win, and no plan to get out. Stay the course is the slogan. And that is

all it is, a slogan, not a solution. It is a prescription for an

endless occupation of Iraq.

The Democrats are united on the need for a new direction in Iraq.

2006 must be a year of significant transition. Iraqis must take control

of their security and begin a responsible redeployment of U.S. troops.

There has been no person who has addressed that issue more eloquently

on this floor and back home in her native California in the city of the

Angels than the gentlewoman from California, who has led a task force

here in this Congress that focuses on a meaningful plan for an exit

strategy from Iraq.

At this time, I would like to yield to the distinguished lady from

California, Maxine Waters.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank

the gentlewoman; and I just want to buttress her point here. In The

Washington Post, first, Carl Levin, our distinguished Senator and

brother of Sander Levin here in the House, one of the sponsors of the

resolution, said that ``probably the worst kept secret in town is that

this administration intends to pull out troops before the mid-term

elections in November. It shouldn't be a political decision, but it's

going to be with this administration. It is as clear as the nose on my

face,'' he said, ``that it is all about November and this election.''

And as the gentlewoman pointed out, it shouldn't be.

Jack Murtha has said over and over again only the Iraqis can solve

the problems in Iraq. They are fighting with each other, and our troops

are caught in between.

And no one less than Iraq's National Security Advisor said, ``Iraq

has to go out of the shadow of the United States and the coalition,

take responsibility for its own decisions, learn from its mistakes, and

find Iraqi solutions to Iraqi problems.'' Repeating again exactly what

Mr. Murtha has been advocating.

I want to now also turn to the gentleman from Washington State (Mr.

Inslee), who has been part of the Iraq Watch and from the very outset

of this war has come to this floor almost on a regular basis to talk

about the concerns that so many Americans in this

country care deeply about, most notably the men and women who serve

this country.

I yield to Mr. Inslee.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman

from Washington State again for his insightful comments and pointing

out the new direction that this country needs to forge and that

certainly that the people of this country desire and, as you so

eloquently pointed out, as importantly, the people of Iraq.

But I would also add that this is something that the generals of this

country who have come forward and spoken out with great clarity also

feel strongly about.

Lieutenant General Greg Newbold: ``What we are living with now is the

consequences of successive policy failures.''

Major General Paul Eaton: ``Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is

not competent to lead our Armed Forces. His failure to build coalitions

with our allies has imposed far greater demands and risks on our

soldiers in Iraq than necessary. He has shown himself to be incompetent

strategically, operationally and tactically.''

Lieutenant General John Riggs: ``They only need the military advice

when it satisfies their agenda,'' speaking on National Public Radio

about the Bush administration. ``They only need the military advice

when it satisfies their own agenda.''

General Wesley Clark: ``They pressed for open warfare before

diplomacy was finished. It was a tragic mistake. It's a strategic

blunder.''

General Anthony Zinni: ``We are paying the price for the lack of

credible planning, or the lack of a plan. Ten years worth of planning

were thrown away, troop levels dismissed out of hand. These were

strategic mistakes, mistakes of policy made back here by this

administration.''

Mr. INSLEE. Will the gentleman yield for a moment? I want to add an

additional mistake, if I can briefly, that I think is very important

for us to talk about, and that is the mistake to not send the message

that the Iraqis are going to have a country that is free at some point

of United States forces.

This poll that I talked about, when they asked Iraqis, do you think

the U.S. Government plans to have permanent military bases in Iraq, 80

percent of the people answered that they thought we were going to do

that.

When asked, do you believe that we will at some point remove our

military once Iraq is stabilized, 80 percent of Iraqis believe we will

not remove our forces even after Iraq is stabilized.

There is a reason for them to believe that. Because on this floor,

when we tried to put a provision in a defense bill that says we won't

have any Iraq permanent bases in Iraq, which we actually succeeded in

doing on the floor, the first thing that happened, in the dead of night

in one of these conference committees, the Republican Party stripped it

out.

The message we are sending to Iraq is we are going to stay there as

long as we want and perhaps permanently. That is the wrong message. We

need to send a different message. That is why we are here tonight.

Reclaiming my time, in my opening remarks,

this is confusing to American citizens, because Karl Rove, the Sunday

prior to the debate that started here in this House, was in New

Hampshire; and he laid out the strategic vision for the Republican

Party. It was a political gathering, but he laid out that strategic

vision. I can understand why the public gets confused, because he said

very publicly that what we have to do is ``stay the course,'' and then

it was the Democrats who wanted, to use one of their slogans, ``cut and

run.'' But they were going to stay the course.

Then that was followed by the majority leader's talking points that

were disseminated on the floor here which, of course, was again

discrediting Democrats, and most notably Mr. Murtha, about cutting and

running.

Then it becomes even more confounding, because the debate that ensued

was, as you point out, I think uplifting in some circumstances, because

it was trying to define where people stand. Ninety-nine percent of them

felt very strongly that we ought to stay the course, while 78 percent

on this side felt there ought to be a new direction. So people became

somewhat confused. And that was all sandwiched in between the

President's flight and photo-op to Iraq and the White House picnic.

Then, lo and behold, last week, the debate in the Senate, where it

even reaches a feverish pitch, and we have had more plans hatched and

looked at by the Democrats, including the Murtha proposal, as Maxine

discussed, and the Levin plan in the Senate, as well as Ike Skelton's

proposal and David Price's proposal down here. It goes on and on. So

people can get confused.

Then, as you are chronicling these events, all of a sudden the Iraqi

security adviser says they have a plan; and their plan includes, as Mr.

Inslee pointed out, that the Iraqi people want us out of there. Eight-

seven percent want us out of there. Eighty-seven percent believe that

they are better off taking control of their own destiny. And now you

are telling the American people, though, that, look, this really

doesn't have anything to do with all of that. This is about an

election. Not their election.

Briefly reclaiming my time, could it be

that one of the reasons they are not speaking out as forthrightly as

they should, and I am just surmising this, is because part of this

reconciliation that has been discussed is the granting of amnesty to

Iraqis who have murdered or kidnapped American soldiers or civilians?

We have put forward a resolution here. It was debated during our

discussion here, but not a nonbinding resolution. We put forward a

resolution that will actually bind the Congress to instruct the

President to send a message to the Iraqi Government that that cannot

stand; that we, this Congress, and the American public will not stand

by and let them recuse people who have taken American lives, who have

kidnapped and tortured and mutilated Americans.

We will never stand by and let that happen. Could that be part of the

reason?

One gentleman who has been doing that

consistently is the distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts, who,

along with Mr. Inslee, headed up the Iraq Watch from the inception of

this war, and who always provides us with insightful observations.

I am sure he is intrigued, as both Mr. Inslee and Mr. McDermott are,

with the developments of this past weekend with General Casey's

proposal, et cetera. I would yield to him at this time.

One of the reasons that we come to the

floor this evening, and Mr. McDermott alluded to it, is making sure

that we do not sit idle to miss the so-called debate that Mr. Delahunt

suggested took place both here in this Chamber, a nonbinding

discussion, if you will, and in the Senate.

Because in the past, charges have been made and leveled, slogans

tossed out, and they have not been responded to. We are not going to

stand by, because the American public desires a new direction, and more

importantly desires people who are willing to speak truth to power.

That is why Jack Murtha is so celebrated across this country. It is

not so much for the particulars of his plan, but for the fact that he

had the temerity to speak truth to power. And so we will not stand

idle, and we will come to this floor on successive evenings to drive

home the point to the American people.

Mr. Delahunt, you articulated so clearly the need to level with the

American public. And I started this evening talking about saying

goodbye to the Reservists and National Guard of the 1048th Truckers

Division from the State of Connecticut, a very painful thing.

And most important is the need to level with our own troops and the

families, who, as you point out, are the only ones who have had to make

a sacrifice since September 11. The only people that our government has

requested sacrifice of are the men and women who wear the uniform and

their families.

Well, if the gentleman will yield, I think

Graham Ellison has stated it most eloquently. He said ``Americans are

no safer from nuclear terrorist attack today than we were on September

10, 2001.'' He said, ``A central reason for that can be summed up in

one word: Iraq. The invasion and occupation have diverted essential

resources from the fight against al Qaeda, allowed the Taliban to

regroup in Afghanistan, fostered neglect of the Iranian nuclear threat,

undermined alliances critical to preventing terrorism, devastated

America's standing with the public in every country in Europe, and

destroyed it in the Muslim world.''

That about sums it up, where we were and why we need a new direction.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlemen for joining me this evening.