Mr. Speaker, people around the world were greatly moved

by the courage of millions of Iraqis who braved death to cast a ballot

on January 30, Iraq's first democratic elections in over 50 years. The

Iraqi elections, however, did not justify this destructive war, neither

the lies used to sell it nor the incompetence with which it has been

managed.

The elections will not bring back the 1,500 American soldiers who

have been killed or heal the over-10,000 American troops who have been

wounded, and they certainly cannot bring back the untold thousands of

Iraqis who have lost their lives. These elections will not reimburse

the American taxpayers nearly $200 billion spent over the last 3 years,

and the elections will not stop the vicious insurgency that is

terrorizing Iraqi communities.

But the elections do demonstrate that Iraqis are prepared to manage

their own affairs. That is why I believe that now is the time to

develop and implement a plan to bring our soldiers home and end the

U.S. military presence in Iraq absolutely as soon as possible.

Together with 27 cosponsors, I have introduced H. Con. Res. 35,

calling for a plan to end this military mishap. Earlier today I wrote

to the gentleman from Illinois (Chairman Hyde) and the gentleman from

California (Mr. Lantos), the chairman and ranking member of the

Committee on International Relations, asking them to hold hearings on

this matter.

The Bush administration spared no superlative in talking about the

significance of the Iraqi elections. Such a momentous watershed event,

however, would seem to demand a shift in our thinking about Iraq. But

not for President Bush. He actually has become more emboldened by the

election. He sees this as a mandate to keep our soldiers in Iraq as

long as he wants. He and his surrogates are even engaging in

provocative saber-rattling in the direction of Iran.

The Iraq elections did not vindicate the doctrine of preemptive war,

and they do not undo all the death and destruction that has occurred as

a result. They demonstrated that the Iraqis can and should take control

of their own destinies. Leaving will not be sufficient to defeat the

insurgency, but staying absolutely will intensify it.

What is fueling the insurgency and what gave rise to it in the first

place is our continued military presence in Iraq. Our troops, whom the

administration assured us would be embraced as liberators, are the

focal point of anti-American extremism, making them sitting ducks.

Let me be clear: I am not advocating a cut-and-run strategy. It would

be irresponsible for the United States to abandon the Iraqi people.

What we must do is play a role in facilitating their transition to

stable democracy. We ought to work with Iraq's elected officials, the

United Nations and the Arab League to create an international

peacekeeping force that will keep Iraq secure. Much of the money we are

spending on this military campaign should be diverted to infrastructure

projects that will improve Iraqis' lives, such as road construction,

new schools, water processing plants and more.

Up to this point, Iraq's economic development has been scandalously

mismanaged by the Bush administration, as billions of dollars

appropriated by Congress have not actually been put to work on the

ground. All future investments must be made with the needs of Iraqis

being paramount, not the United States Government contractors and not

other war profiteers.

Mr. Speaker, I believe a focus on developmental and humanitarian aid

in Iraq would be a model for a radically new approach to national

security. We need what I call SMART security, which is a Sensible,

Multilateral, American Response to Terrorism.

Instead of resorting to the military option and spending needlessly

on weapons systems, the SMART security plan that I propose calls for

building multilateral partnerships, partnerships that enable us to foil

terrorists and stop weapons of mass destruction proliferation.

A SMART security plan would address the conditions that led to

terrorism in the first place: poverty, hopelessness, despair. Instead

of troops, we should send scientists, educators, urban planners and

constitutional experts to the troubled regions of the world.

It is time, Mr. Speaker, for the United States to play the role of

Iraq's ally and partner, not its occupier. It is time to give Iraq back

to its own people. It is time to truly support our troops by beginning

to bring them home. The first step is for the chairman and ranking

member of the Committee on International Relations to hold hearings on

this matter now.

The Iraqi elections, however, will never justify the destructive war,

and

it will never stand up to the lies that we heard to sell it.