Mr. Speaker, when it comes to Iraq, the President and

his administration continue to act like cowboys in a western movie.

When will they learn? And until they do, there will be no solution in

Iraq.

The President stampeded the American people into a flawed, futile,

and fatal war; and this administration keeps applying B-movie mentality

to real-life suffering. We have taken sides in a war-torn nation,

inadvertently backing the Kurds and Shiites to the detriment of the

Sunnis.

This is not some clan fight on a movie set that will get solved with

a new sheriff riding into town proclaiming peace and progress. But that

is what the administration's current strategy seems to be. Despite

demands by Iraqi Sunni leaders that American forces stop new military

operations, the fighting continues unabated. And like Vietnam, the

latest administration tactic is to announce body counts, as if that

will promote confidence among the American people. That same tactic was

used during Vietnam. It did not work then, and it will not work in

Iraq. If anything, this latest tactic will only deepen American

resentment to this war because the American people know they are only

being told part of the story.

The Rumsfeld command is happy to announce the number of insurgents

killed or captured, but they do not talk much about the innocent Iraqi

civilians killed or wounded. They are not announcing those numbers

every day. Why not? If they killed or captured 80 insurgents, how many

civilians were injured or wounded in the process? Why do they not tell

us the whole story?

Iraq is an urban guerilla warfare, and our brave soldiers should not

be fighting a house-to-house war that puts them in maximum danger all

the time. There is no front line in Iraq because every road is the

front, every house is the front, and every footstep is along the front

line. There is no safe haven for our soldiers. Danger is everywhere no

matter where they sleep, no matter what they eat, no matter how much

they try to forget this war for even a moment.

And the administration calls this progress. The American people see

it as a paralysis of leadership. The President stampeded the Congress

into a do-or-die scenario, and now our soldiers keep dying in the wrong

place at the wrong time and for the wrong reason.

When was the last time the President even mentioned Osama bin Laden,

the terrorist who is supposed to have started this whole thing, this

war on terror?

The White House has built an underground bunker to keep out reality.

The truth cannot penetrate those walls of denial, fortified with

Presidential speeches to carefully selected audiences. Now the

President is beginning to say that he is not responsible for the war in

Iraq. The record is clear, Mr. Speaker: this war was started by this

President and his war cabinet. They got what they wanted. They got more

than they can handle. And every new pronouncement from the White House

bunker widens the gulf between administration rhetoric and Iraq

reality.

Reality may be missing in action at the White House, but reality is

front and center with the American people. Another Presidential speech

with yet another spin on why the President wants this war will not do

anything to stabilize Iraq, promote peace, or create democracy.

We are just learning about the latest catastrophe. Now Americans

soldiers have to launch operations to uncover hundreds of Sunnis

abused, tortured, and malnourished in a prison run by the people we put

in power.

Imposing our will is a prescription for civil war and ethnic scandals

in Iraq. Imposing a Western blueprint on a Middle Eastern culture will

undermine any attempt at real peace. Iraq needs the benefit of a Middle

Eastern solution, a cultural process that has worked for thousands of

years. Many in the Middle East know this. Many have tried to tell us.

But we will not listen. Their will, not ours, will define democracy in

Iraq. If we are serious about an election in Iraq, we have to stop the

provocations.

America is at a crossroads: stability or continued occupation of

Iraq. The Rumsfeld command now admits American soldiers could be there

for a decade or more. That is occupation, and nobody outside the

administration favors it. Ten more years of house-to-

house guerilla fighting is a failed mission and a guarantee of more

U.S. lives lost. 2,056 flags draped over 2,056 coffins; 2,056 honor

guards and 2,056 grieving families paying respects of a grateful

Nation. And we are still counting.

Mr. President, you have to change the course.

There's a difference in a President leading the nation through a time

of crisis and this President misleading the nation into precipitating a

crisis. We have a crisis. We need a leader. We need a plan to return

U.S. soldiers to U.S. soil, not a decade from now, but right now.

Announce a pull-out date and pull back the troops to their camps.