Mr. Speaker, tonight on the heels of Hurricane Katrina,

I cannot help but ask how the victims would have been helped had our

National Guard and our military and our Corps of Engineers equipment

been made available here at home, not across the world, making trouble

instead of fixing troubles here as we responded to Katrina.

Tonight I will discuss what is happening in Iraq since we were last

in session 5 weeks ago. For the last 4 years, the Bush administration

has often justified the war in Iraq by boasting of the new-found

freedoms Iraqi women would supposedly enjoy thanks to our military

intervention.

Many of us remember that staple of the President's stump speech, that

the first voter in the Iraqi elections was a 19-year-old woman. In this

very Chamber, an Iraqi woman sat with the First Lady during the State

of the Union address and flashed the victory sign in celebration of the

election that had just taken place.

Well, that was then, Mr. Speaker. That same woman, now Iraq's

ambassador to Egypt, is one of several Iraqis now publicly criticizing

their nation's draft constitution and its treatment of women's rights.

In fact, the very second article of the Iraqi Constitution declares

that Islam is

You do not have to be a theologian, Mr. Speaker, to know that

adherence to strict Islamic tradition is incompatible with equal rights

and dignity for women.

Most depressing of all, perhaps, is that this constitution may

actually represent a weakening of women's rights from the previous

regime. That is right. Women may have fewer legal protections in this

new so-called democracy than they had under the rule of that famous

feminist and egalitarian Saddam Hussein. Is this what nearly 1,900

American soldiers have died for, so that Iraq could slip into

repressive theocracy? Perhaps this is the noble cause, the cause we

have been hearing so much about: second-class citizenship for Iraqi

women.

The weapons of mass destruction claim was discredited long ago. The

Iraq-al Qaeda link is nonexistent. Now it even appears that the

spreading-freedom-and-democracy rationale for this war is also a fraud.

Mr. Speaker, this is just one more reason that we must end this

occupation and bring our troops home as soon as possible.

One week from Thursday, I will be holding a hearing here on Capitol

Hill where we will hear from experts about how we might achieve

military disengagement while still playing a constructive role in the

rebuilding of Iraq. Bringing the troops home should be the beginning;

it should not be the end of a reassessment of our national security

policy. It is time to end the reflex impulse of using military force to

solve world conflicts and erroneously planned actions based on

citizens' fears. This has the appearance of strength; but as Iraq has

shown, it often undermines our national security rather than enhancing

it.

I have proposed a new approach. It is called SMART Security. SMART

stands for Sensible, Multilateral American Response to Terrorism. SMART

is based on the belief that war should be an absolute last resort, to

be undertaken only under the most extreme circumstances.

But that does not mean that SMART is not serious and smart about

protecting America. It is vigilant about fighting terrorism and weapons

of mass destruction. But it does so with strong multilateral alliances,

improved intelligence capabilities, vigorous inspection regimes, and

aggressive diplomacy. SMART would reshuffle our national security

budget. No more billions thrown at outdated Cold War weapons programs.

That money would instead be invested in energy independence and other

efforts that truly are relevant to the modern security threats we face.

SMART also includes an ambitious international development agenda, to

help address the root causes of terrorism: Democracy-building that

includes women as equals; education for women and girls; addressing

resource scarcity--these are key ingredients to building stable

societies in Iraq and elsewhere.

It is my hope and belief that the grievous mistakes we've made in

Iraq will lead us to this new, smarter national security policy. SMART

Security protects America by relying on the very best of American

values--our capacity for global leadership, our dedication to peace and

freedom, and our compassion for the people of the world, all people,

women and men alike.