

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Mr. Speaker, before we can even consider sending more of our young men and women into harm's way, we must first determine what our mission is in Iraq. Only then will it be possible to intelligently discuss the number of troops necessary to meet that mission. But 4 years after going to war in Iraq, the administration has yet to clearly articulate a mission. Without a mission and a strategy with a credible chance of success, we should not even be discussing an increase in troop levels.

Mr. Speaker, before we respond to the President's call for an escalation of the war in Iraq, we must first put his speech in the context of the history of the war in Iraq. We need to begin with a discussion of what the current 130,000 troops are doing in Iraq now before we can discuss what 20,000 additional troops might do.

The original reasons which were provided as the rationale for going to war, Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, Iraqi leaders were connected with the 9/11 attacks, and that Iraq posed an imminent threat to the United States, all turned out not to be true.

We have found no weapons of mass destruction, and we know that Iraqi leaders were not connected with the 9/11 attacks. And we were told before the invasion into Iraq that, in the opinion of the CIA, Iraq posed no imminent terrorist threat to the United States. In fact, a letter from the Director of the CIA to the Chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, dated October 7, 2002, specifically stated that the CIA believed that Iraq and Saddam Hussein did not pose a terrorist threat to the United States and would not be expected to pose such a threat unless we attacked Iraq.

Last night, the President once again attempted to associate our presence in Iraq with the so-called war on terrorism. The truth is that our presence in Iraq has actually increased our risk to terrorism. Furthermore, the term "war on terrorism" is a rhetorical term without any relationship to reality. "Terrorism" is not an enemy; it is a tactic. The enemy is al Qaeda. We attacked Afghanistan because al Qaeda was there.

But after the initial reasons turned out to be false, we have been subjected to a series of excuses for being in Iraq, such as the need to capture Saddam Hussein, the need to capture al-Zarqawi and the need to establish a democracy.

Well, Saddam Hussein was in jail for almost 2 years before he was recently hanged. Al-Zarqawi was killed over 6 months ago, and Iraq held Democratic elections over a year ago. Yet we remain in Iraq, with no apparent end in sight. And here we are talking about increasing, not decreasing, troop levels.

So what are we doing in Iraq? Why did we go in? What do we expect to accomplish? And

what will our strategy be for getting out? After we receive truthful answers to these questions, we can intelligently discuss appropriate troop levels.

Last night, the President said he was laying out a new mission for Iraq, thereby clearly acknowledging that whatever the old mission was, it wasn't working. But there is still no clearly defined end goal and clearly defined explanation of how failure or success can be measured. So we remain where we were before the speech, which is on an unclear, undefined path, while continuing to put more troops in harm's way.

If our mission is to stabilize Baghdad, military experts have already said that an additional 20,000 troops is woefully insufficient, so sending these troops will not accomplish that goal. And what happens if Iraq fails to meet its responsibilities, or Baghdad remains unstable and the price is more American deaths? Will we send even more troops? Or will we just cut and run?

And how will we know the new initiative will work? Before our invasion into Iraq, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld predicted that the war would last, and I quote, "six days, six weeks. I doubt 6 months." It has been almost 4 years, and we are still in Iraq with no end in sight.

At the outset of the war, the administration advised the House Budget Committee that it expected the cost of the war to be so minuscule that it advised the committee not to include the cost of the war in the Federal budget, and the administration official who suggested that the cost of the war might exceed \$100 billion was fired.

To date, the cost of the war to the United States is over \$375 billion, with no end in sight. Over 3,000 courageous Americans have already lost their lives. How many more will die if this new strategy falls as far from the predicted result as the original time and cost estimates? We need to be honest in clearly stating the likelihood that this initiative might fail.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, as far as developing a new mission and strategy, it is imperative that we ask where these additional troops will come from. Many will have to come from the National Guard and Reserve, and the escalation will mean longer and multiple deployments. But our troops already in Iraq have served for above-average deployments, and many have already completed multiple tours. Other troops may be redeployed from other assignments. So we must ask what moving these troops will mean to our global national security. We cannot assess the wisdom of an escalation without first answering these critical questions.

We need to develop a coherent plan for Iraq, and that can only begin with truthfully acknowledging our situation there. Unfortunately, all we have gotten from this administration is essentially "Don't worry, be happy. Success is around the corner. And if you don't believe that, then you are not patriotic."

Last November, the American people sent a powerful message that they wanted a real change in Iraq, not more of the same. This Congress needs to hold substantive hearings on why we entered Iraq in the first place, what the present situation is, what we can now expect to accomplish and what the strategy is to accomplish it, and only then can we intelligently discuss the troop levels necessary to accomplish that goal.

It is absurd to discuss troop levels first before we have answers to these critical questions. The American people and our courageous men and women on the front lines deserve a clear, articulated and sensible approach to ending the war in Iraq. Starting with an escalation of military forces is a step in the wrong direction.