Mr. Chairman, today I rise in support of the

supplemental budget despite reservations about parts of this

legislation. While I think this bill could be substantially improved, I

also believe that, on balance, it does more good than harm. This bill

provides funds for a number of important purposes, including the

equipment necessary to support and protect our troops in Iraq and

Afghanistan; emergency relief for the victims of hurricane Katrina; and

funds to support international efforts to stop the mass killings of

innocent people in Sudan. I will address each of these in turn.

Let me start with Iraq. While I opposed the President's decision to

go to war in Iraq and Afghanistan, I am supporting this bill because I

believe we must provide our troops with the necessary equipment while

they are there. I also believe, however, that the President has failed

to provide the American people with a viable plan for success in Iraq.

This bill fails to include benchmarks to hold the Administration

accountable. The bill also fails to include adequate safeguards to

ensure that the funds are spent responsibly.

Millions of dollars have already been lost or wasted in Iraq due to

poor oversight. Every effort must be made to prevent another

Halliburton from growing fat at the expense of the American taxpayer. I

recently supported an amendment in the Government Reform Committee that

would have held the federal government responsible for overspending and

general mismanagement of federal funds. Despite the common sense nature

of this amendment, it failed on a party line vote. This Congress has

totally failed in its oversight responsibilities with respect to these

funds.

Let me now turn to Afghanistan. I supported the decision to take

military action against al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. I

believe we have not yet completed our mission there. Osama bin Laden

remains at large, al Qaeda continues to operate and the Taliban have

stepped up their attacks. In the face of these realities, the funds

provided for U.S. and international efforts in Afghanistan are

inadequate.

During a recent hearing before the House Appropriations Committee,

Ronald Neumann, our Ambassador in Afghanistan testified that not enough

was being been appropriated for our efforts there. I agree. This bill

fails to meet the commitments we have made to Afghanistan. It defers

the promised cancellation of Afghanistan's $11 million debt owed to the

United States; it cuts $16 million from USAID for mission security in

Afghanistan and reduces by $2.2 billion Department of Defense funds for

Afghan security force training. The bill also cuts funds for counter-

narcotics activities in Afghanistan from $193 million to $157 million.

As U.S. commanders prepare to devolve more responsibility for

security to other coalition partners and to the Afghans, they must

account for the fact that it could take years and billions of dollars

to achieve the level of self-sustainability necessary to provide for

Afghanistan's infrastructure and national security needs.

A critical test will occur this summer as the U.S. military

officially hands over control of the dangerous southern region to NATO

forces. Counter-insurgency has never been NATO's job and there are

questions about whether it is ready and willing to take on this new

role. The volatile southern region has the highest incidents of

terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime in the country. Of the

more than 100 American soldiers killed in insurgency attacks in the

last year--most of the deaths occurred in the southern region.

We must recognize that it is in our national security interest to

work with the Afghan people. We must work to accelerate efforts to

build and strengthen national institutions, the economy and Afghan

security. By reducing the funding for Afghan operations at this

critical time we are sending the wrong message to our troops, to our

allies and to the people of Afghanistan.

Next, to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina, the bill contains $19

billion to aid recovery and reconstruction efforts. Most of the funds

will go to the Federal Emergency Management Agency but $4 billion will

go towards community development and for loans to homeowners, renters

and businesses. Months after the hurricane, thousands of people are

still looking for permanent homes. This funding will help citizens

displaced by Hurricane Katrina rebuild their lives.

This bill also contains emergency funding to help those suffering in

Sudan. The United States and the international community have failed to

take adequate steps to stop the genocide. This bill at least attempts

to alleviate the suffering. It includes $66 million for humanitarian

support, $11 million to assist refugees in Darfur and Chad to return to

their homes, $150 million for food, $123 million to support African

Union troops and, with the adoption of the Capuano amendment, $88

million to prepare for the transition to UN peacekeepers.

Mr. Chairman, despite the reservations I have raised, I believe the

bill deserves our support.