Mr. Speaker, as already has been

noted this evening, tomorrow the House will begin a 3-day debate on the

question of whether or not we support the escalation of the war in Iraq

by supporting the President's policy to send over 21,000 additional

troops to Baghdad, what is called the surge, but is in fact an

escalation of the war and of the exposure of our American troops in

Iraq.

It is an important debate, and it will be an important vote. It will

be a very simple proposition: Either you support the escalation or you

do not. This is the vote that the American people have been asking for

now for many, many months. They certainly expressed it in the election.

They have expressed it since the election where we see time and again

they are telling the country, they are telling those of us who are in

the Congress of the United States that they do not support this policy;

they want an exit plan; they want our young men and women brought home

from Iraq; and they want the Iraqis to take responsibility for the

political decisions that must be made if Iraq is in fact going to be a

unified country, if Iraq in fact can proceed along a road to building

democratic institutions and hopefully finally building a democracy.

But none of that, none of that will be done by the troops from

America. None of that can be done by the troops from America. The fact

of the matter is that that must be done by the Iraqi people.

But there will be those in this debate who will be defending the

President's failed strategy in Iraq by attacking the President's

critics. They ask, what message would America send to its troops in

combat if Congress votes to repudiate the President's plan? What

message, indeed?

Mr. Speaker, the question really is, what message did Congress send

to our troops from the very beginning of this miserable war?

What message did Congress send to the troops in the beginning of this

miserable war when they voted to go to war based upon the lack of

proper evidence, false evidence, manipulated evidence and, in fact,

outright lies to the American people and to the world about the

situation in Iraq, and certainly a war that was not vital to the

interest of the United States?

What message did Congress send when it allowed the President to go to

war without enough troops to secure the peace?

What message did the Congress send when it allowed our troops to go

into combat without proper armored vehicles?

What message did Congress send when it allowed our troops to go into

combat without proper protective body armor?

And what message did the Congress send when it allowed the President

to continue a failed course in Iraq with no adjustments in strategy?

What message did Congress send when it allowed the President to

effectively draft American volunteers by continuing their tours of duty

over and over again?

And what message did the Congress send to our troops, indeed?

But there is a new Congress now and there is a new message for our

troops. By raising objections to the President's failed strategy, and

by demanding a new course in Iraq and the immediate and responsible

redeployment of our forces, we will send a new and clear message to our

troops. Our message to the American forces in combat is that we will

not let you fight and die forever in Iraq with no plan to get you out,

with no exit plan. Our message is that we will insist that the Iraqis

take responsibility for their country and the building of a democracy,

and that soon American forces will be brought home or redeployed to

fight the real war on terror.

Our message is that the American forces will not be used to fight

Iraq's civil war. Our message to the President's few remaining

supporters in the House and Senate is, do not exploit our brave troops

in combat in a desperate and vain effort to bolster a weak President.

Do not use our brave men and women serving in Iraq to cling to a

misguided policy that is dangerous for America's interests and for its

troops as well.

Join us in opposing the escalation of the war in Iraq, and when we

see that history is now repeating itself, where once again the

administration is prepared to send our soldiers into Iraq without

proper equipment and without proper training, demand, instead, a new

strategy to get America out of Iraq's civil war, to get Iraq to take

responsibility for its own future, and to use our troops for the proper

mission, to defend America.