Mr. Speaker, even for those convinced the surge in Iraq

is a mistake, or at a point where our goals cannot realistically be

attained, the manner in which we implement a decision to leave that

country is critical to our Nation. How the United States manages its

transition from a major war to the aftermath of our withdrawal is

crucial for our strategic security.

And therefore, a Congress mandating a new security policy through the

force of law owes a careful explanation to the country why and how it

is to be done, including dealing with what would occur in the

aftermath.

Americans may be tired of this war, but as a group they still expect

it to be brought to an end that salvages as much as possible from the

situation and protects our broader interests in the region and the

world.

This strategic approach is not just about

Rather, the important concept to pursue is a strategic

redeployment from Iraq that enhances our security by giving us the

leverage to begin to unify Iraqis and bring about a regional

accommodation that works toward that nation's stability.

However much Americans may desire to reduce forces in Iraq quickly,

this Nation must still face the aftermath of what will happen in the

region after redeployment by the force of law. And while some may try

to characterize this as President Bush's war, it is the whole country's

war in terms of how its consequences will affect us. For example, a

careless redeployment due to haste most endangers our 160,000 troops

and estimated over 100,000 civilian contractors in Iraq.

Withdrawal is when military forces are at their most vulnerable,

something our Nation paid heed to when it took the 6 months necessary

to redeploy less than 10,000 troops safely from Somalia in the 1990s.

In Iraq, there is one road to Kuwait for thousands of convoys and much

planning left to do for such a redeployment to occur safely.

And some ideas for a drawdown will prove less viable than some

assume. For instance, maintaining residual forces to train Iraqis may

well not work for the safety of U.S. troops embedded in an Iraqi

military whose loyalty is suspect at best and fighting motivation

questionable. Would we then need to retain large combat forces for

their protection, and if so, how many?

Let's therefore understand the full limitations of such ideas before

supporting them without careful strategic thought.

Such strategic considerations suggest that the precise shape of a

strategy to redeploy matters a great deal. Responsibility should be

assigned: To the Iraqis to assume accountability for their country; to

regional nations to demonstrate accommodations towards

stability; and to Congress for the consequences of the aftermath which

it will have dictated.

A realistic timeline of a year that is needed for a safe redeployment

of our troops also serves well to protect our regional interests. It

provides the time needed for a strategy of regional accommodation to

take effect with Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia, a strategy that rightly

relies upon their long-term interest in a stable aftermath.

But in the end, we most importantly must make it clear that we will

not be made hostage to the permission of our Iraqi friends. This is the

crux of the strategic approach to enhancing our global strategic

security: That while Iraqis will have ultimate say over their country,

we as a Nation need to send a strong message that we are no longer

willing to support it in a futile pursuit.

Only by a date that defines the end of our open-ended commitment can

we force the Iraqis and regional nations to assume responsibility in

working towards a stable Iraq. We will then, in the eyes of the world,

leave with the Iraqis and regional nations having clearly helped choose

the aftermath by their decisions or indecision.

We cannot afford an inconclusive, open-ended involvement within a

country where the long-term security benefits do not match what we need

to reap, and where the trade-off in benefits of not focusing elsewhere

is harming our strategic security, including a significant negative

impact on the readiness of our Armed Forces here at home. Nor can we

afford a nonstrategic approach to the end to our involvement in this

war, also undermining our future strategic security. Rather than

leading to a spiral of violence, redeploying from Iraq under a

strategic timeline of a year will serve as the necessary catalyst for

the Iraqis to assume responsibility for their country, with regional

nations then interested in ensuring stability when the United States is

outside that nation, but remaining with strength in the region.

The needed accommodation will only come about when the Iraqi

political leaders are forced to take the difficult political steps

required to cease the violence in their country, such as building

cooperation among competing sects and sharing oil revenues among all

regions in Iraq. And regional nations' incentives, particularly Syria's

and Iran's, change toward stability when the United States is no longer

there in the midst of a civil war. And these nations will have to bear

the consequences of further strife, with refugee flows to their

countries and the possibility that these relatively allied nations

could then be joined in a proxy battle to their detriment.

Ending this war is necessary but insufficient, and Mr. Speaker, how

we end it and by what means is of even greater importance for the

troop's safety and our own security.