Mr. Speaker, I commanded an aircraft carrier battle group

of 30 ships off Afghanistan during the war from the Indian Ocean. We

were told one day to take those 30 ships into the Persian Gulf, which

some thought would be the running start to the Iraqi war.

Of those 30 ships, 20 of them were not United States' ships. They

were Japanese. They were Australian. They were Italian. They were

Greek. There were many other ships from throughout this world. But when

we entered through the Strait of Hormuz into the Persian Gulf, none of

those ships came with us except the British and the Australians. At

that time, I knew that this war in Iraq would be a tragic misadventure.

Two months after the war in Afghanistan commenced, I was actually on

the ground in Afghanistan. I saw for a very short period of time what

needed to be done in order to bring about a successful resolution of

that conflict.

After the war in Iraq was over and I left my carrier battle group, I

was on the ground again for a short period again in Afghanistan and saw

what had not been done, because we had diverted not just our attention

but our resources, our PSYOPS forces, our special forces, our civil

affairs units to Iraq. To me, Afghanistan is a poster child, as it is

pre-terrorist and the Taliban have shifted into the southern provinces

again and what Iraq has done to U.S. security worldwide.

So, therefore, I believe that the only strategy that we can pursue

for success in Iraq is to have a date that is certain by which we will

redeploy out of Iraq. We have to do this for two primary reasons.

First, a date certain changes the structure of incentives within the

countries that are in that region to change the behavior. Iraqis need

to step up to the plate, understanding we will not be there providing

political and military cover to pursue the personal fiefdoms within the

ministries of Baghdad's governments.

Also, Iran and Syria are involved destructively in this war. Once

they know that we will not be there, they have an incentive to work for

stability. They do not want the more than 4 million refugees that are

dislocated within Iraq, and some have already filled our borders, to

continue to overflow it, if we are not there to contain that

instability.

Second, they do not want a proxy war between these two allied

nations, Syria, Sunni and Iranian Shi'a. If we are not there, they do

not want to fuel a proxy war between themselves as they support

different religious factions.

But there is a second reason why we must have a date certain with

sufficient time to redeploy our troops.

It took us 6 months to redeploy out of Somalia, a much smaller force.

In Iraq, we have 140,000 troops and over 100,000 civilians. No one

should ever try to redeploy those troops, and what is the hardest

military operation to do is withdrawal, when they are most vulnerable

in a short period of time.

We must have a date certain as a strategy, as the only leverage

remaining to change the behavior of nations within that region to work

for stability and to have our troops, those who wear the cloth of this

Nation, that we sent there to have a redeployment that can be safe.

I ask this Congress to think the next time, as we must work for an

end to this open-ended commitment, that we do so with sufficient time,

as my bill said, by the end of December 31, but on an authorization

bill, not an appropriations bill, where we again would be forced to

vote, as I had to, for the safety of our troops versus the need to

redeploy from Iraq, under a strategy which can leave behind an unfailed

state.

To bring about greater security, an authorization bill is needed.

Being in the military is a dangerous business. It has the dignity of

danger. It should never be unsafe because we are forced in an

appropriations bill, with a short period of time, to not provide the

resources for our forces.

I therefore say that it needs to be an authorization bill with a date

certain to bring about a greater security for the United States.