Mr. Speaker, let me thank you for your

leadership and presence during this important debate and discussion.

I almost don't know where to start. Because when you begin to discuss

the issue of Iraq, you must be very cautious.

One, the constitutional premise is that the President is the

Commander-in-Chief. The immediate inquiries of the press of how are you

going to translate the vote of the American people into action, you are

just the Congress; the Commander-in-Chief has every right to command

the troops. And might I say that this President has commanded the

troops. As I visited Afghanistan and Iraq, every one of those soldiers

has stood up and said, I was willing to come and follow the orders of

my Commander-in-Chief. I respect them, thank them, thank their

families.

That is why I feel a special obligation to begin to renew the energy

and the outrage that many of us expressed during the debate of 2002

when we had hoped that we would have secured

enough votes to oppose the attack on Iraq.

But I am not here to recapture past failures or successes. What I am

here to say is that it is imperative, it is the demand that the

American people have made. Not that we follow opinion polls. For if you

look at the opinion polls, 57 percent of the American people are

dissatisfied with the way Iraq has been handled. Larger numbers than

that are not supporting the escalating of the war.

So many might say, as I imagine the Commander-in-Chief will say

tonight, I am not here to follow opinion polls. I do say that any

elected person has a right to define their own anchor.

But what we are here to do is do right by the American people. We are

here to do right by the 22,000 maimed soldiers who have returned who

are in the Nation's hospitals, who we have not seen, with amputated

arms and legs, those that I have seen in MASH units with imploded

brains because of the IEDs. We are here to do right by the 3,000 plus

who have died and the families who are mourning their loss. We are here

to do right by the soldiers who have said, send me.

I believe that the plan that the President will offer tonight is a

misdirected plan. It is a wrong plan. And let me tell you why. Upping

or plussing or surging the troops should have happened 3 years ago.

This is a war that has lasted longer than World War II. The idea of

more troops without a mission is not effective.

Listen to the generals who have testified before our committees.

Listen to the generals who have now been given early retirement, who

did not agree with the plussing up. Why is it that the President has

often said, I will listen to my generals, and all of a sudden these

generals have been deposed?

And then, of course, the question is a realistic question. Twenty

thousand troops for the city of Baghdad, now captured by the civil war?

Not 20,000 troops to help us in Mosul or Tikrit, but 20,000 troops to

go to Baghdad, a city like Mexico City, or a city that is like another,

a huge teeming city, 25 million plus. And our soldiers will now be the

police officers knocking on doors looking to drag people out of their

houses. That is not a military operation.

And then, of course, let me say to you that we did an operation

upsurge or plus from June to October 2006. The purpose was to secure

Baghdad. But as the Baker Commission has indicated, and I hope the

President has read, this is a sectarian civil war. There is a need for

diplomacy instead of or in front of a military action.

I passed an amendment that said that the redeployment or the number

of times that you have been redeployed should be taken into

consideration before you are being called up. None of that will occur.

We don't have 20,000 troops; and our soldiers have been over two

times, three times, four times, more than any occurrence in Vietnam. In

order to get the 20,000, we must redeploy soldiers who have been on the

battlefield, who are battle worn, not individuals who refuse to serve

their country but are battle worn and battle torn.

What are we for? I am for the rebuilding of the military. I am for

the replenishing of our equipment. I want us to be strong on defense.

But I am not for an escalating war that has no mission and no end.

We must have political diplomacy. We must not send our soldiers. We

must have a new direction.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to speak on the most critical

issue facing our country, the war in Iraq. This misguided, mismanaged,

and costly debacle was preemptively launched by President Bush in March

2003 despite the opposition of me and 125 other Members of the House.

To date, the war in Iraq has lasted longer than America's involvement

in World War II, the greatest conflict in all of human history.

The Second World War ended in complete and total victory for the

United States and its allies. But then again, in that conflict America

was led by a great Commander-in-Chief who had a plan to win the war and

secure the peace, listened to his generals, and sent troops in

sufficient numbers and sufficiently trained and equipped to do the job.

Mr. Speaker, I say with sadness that we have not that same quality of

leadership throughout the conduct of the Iraq war. The results, not

surprisingly, have been disastrous. To date, the war in Iraq has

claimed the lives of 3,015 brave service, men and women, 115 in

December and 13 in the first 9 days of this month. More than 22,000

Americans have been wounded, many suffering the most horrific injuries.

American taxpayers have paid nearly $400 billion to sustain this

misadventure.

Based on media reports, tonight President Bush will not be offering

any new strategy for success in Iraq, just an increase in force levels

of 20,000 American troops. This reported plan will not provide lasting

security for Iraqis. It is not what the American people have asked for,

nor what the American military needs. It will impose excessive and

unwarranted burdens on military personnel and their families.

Mr. Speaker, the architects of the fiasco in Iraq would have us

believe that ``surging'' at least 20,000 more soldiers into Baghdad and

nearby Anbar province is a change in military strategy that America

must embrace or face future terrorist attacks on American soil. Nothing

could be further from the truth, as we learned last year when the

``surge'' idea first surfaced among neoconservatives.

Mr. Speaker, the troop surge the President will announce tonight is

not new and, judging from history, will not work. It will only succeed

in putting more American troops in harm's way for no good reason and

without any strategic advantage. Troop surges have been tried several

times in the past. The success of these surges is, to put it

charitably, has been underwhelming. Let's briefly review the record:

Mr. Speaker, stemming the chaos in Iraq, however, requires more than

opposition to military escalation. It requires us to make hard choices.

Our domestic national security, in fact, rests on redeploying our

military force from Iraq in order to build a more secure Middle East

and continue to fight against global terrorist networks elsewhere in

the world. Strategic redeployment of our armed forces in order to

rebuild our nation's fighting capabilities and renew our critical fight

in Afghanistan against the Taliban and al-Qaeda is not just an

alternative strategy. It's a strategic imperative.

Mr. Speaker, it is past time for a new direction that can lead to

success in Iraq. We cannot wait any longer. Too many Americans and

Iraqis are dying who could otherwise be saved.

I believe the time has come to debate, adopt, and implement the

Murtha Plan for strategic redeployment. I am not talking about

``immediate withdrawal,'' ``cutting and running,'' or surrendering to

terrorists, as the architects of the failed Administration Iraq policy

like to claim. And I certainly am not talking about staying in Iraq

forever or the foreseeable future.

I am talking about a strategic redeployment of troops that:

Reduces U.S. troops in Iraq to 60,000 within six months, and to zero

by the end of 2007, while redeploying troops to Afghanistan, Kuwait,

and the Persian Gulf. Engages in diplomacy to resolve the conflict

within Iraq by convening a Geneva Peace Conference modeled on the

Dayton Accords. Establishes a Gulf Security initiative to deal with the

aftermath of

U.S. redeployment from Iraq and the growing nuclear capabilities of

Iran. Puts Iraq's reconstruction back on track with targeted

international funds. Counters extremist Islamic ideology around the

globe through longterm efforts to support the creation of democratic

institutions and press freedoms.

As the Center for American Progress documents in its last quarterly

report (October 24, 2006), the benefits of strategic redeployment are

significant:

Mr. Speaker, rather than surging militarily for the third time in a

year, the president should surge diplomatically. A further military

escalation would simply mean repeating a failed strategy. A diplomatic

surge would involve appointing an individual with the stature of a

former secretary of state, such as Colin Powell or Madeleine Albright,

as a special envoy. This person would be charged with getting all six

of Iraq's neighbors--Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and

Kuwait--involved more constructively in stabilizing Iraq. These

countries are already involved in a bilateral, self-interested and

disorganized way.

While their interests and ours are not identical, none of these

countries wants to live with an Iraq that, after our redeployment,

becomes a failed state or a humanitarian catastrophe that could become

a haven for terrorists or a hemorrhage of millions more refugees

streaming into their countries.

The high-profile envoy would also address the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict, the role of Hezbollah and Syria in Lebanon, and Iran's rising

influence in the region. The aim would not be necessarily to solve

these problems, but to prevent them from getting worse and to show the

Arab and Muslim world that we share their concerns about the problems

in this region.

Mr. Speaker, the President's plan has not worked. Doing the same

thing over and over and expecting a different result is, as we all

know, a definition of insanity. It is time to try something new. It is

time for change. It is time for a new direction.