Mr. Speaker, over 3 years our Nation has

invested in Iraq. In human and political costs it has been a heavy

toll. We have lost thousands of American and Iraqi lives, spent

billions of dollars, and squandered the greatest outpouring of

international support in decades. And through it all, we have misplaced

our focus on the threat of Islamic terrorism.

It is time for us to prepare to redeploy our forces from Iraq by the

end of the year. Mr. Murtha is right: redeploy but be ready. Some

successes have occurred.

The recent killing of Islamic extremist al Zarqawi by coalition

forces offers an opportunity to stem the steady tide of internal

terrorist attacks in Iraq, while the welcome news that several

important cabinet ministers have been appointed demonstrates that

progress is being made. Nevertheless, these glimpses of optimism cannot

mask the overwhelming recognition that this was a war of choice. The

administration invaded Iraq without the necessary international support

and without plans for stability, reconstruction, and governance.

Earlier this year I visited Iraq and saw firsthand the reality of our

investment. While our troops bravely fight, there were few areas of

security or safety. Sectarian violence and civil strife have eclipsed

the progress of free elections. Unemployment continues unabated.

Radical clerics promote hate, and anti-American sentiment has spread

with fervor. At the same time the President is urging that we stay the

course, we are approaching 2,500 American troops killed, and more and

more we are learning the costs back home, families losing loved ones

and soldiers physically and mentally scarred by war.

We have helped sow the seeds of democracy, but now the people of Iraq

must take charge and bring about their own destiny. We cannot force our

way of life or our ideals upon another nation, nor should that ever be

our mission. Rather, we must encourage them to bring about their own

change and promise that as long as democracy and liberty is their

desire, we will be their ally and be devoted to their success. To

prolong this transition will only deepen their dependence on our

resources, will further radicalize those who use our presence as an

enticement for hate, and will distract us away from where our focus

must lie.

It was only a few years ago that this Congress, with bipartisanship

and unity, supported the President in embarking against the terrorist

threat by ousting the Taliban from Afghanistan. All of our allies and

some of our enemies recognized the strength of our convictions in

defeating those who promote radicalism and extremism, and we were

joined by the largest coalition in history. But then we detoured and

launched an ill-advised military operation in Iraq. The results have

been damaging, and instead of achieving success globally, we have

reached and sowed frustration and recalcitrance.

I believe we are seeing ever increasing signs that our resources in

Iraq must now be shifted to finish the job in Afghanistan and work with

our allies to defeat the terrorist threat around the world. Not because

we have failed or succeeded but because the process of democracy is

never ending. And it is time for the Iraqi people to stand up and lead

the way toward their future. Through redeployment and reallocation, we

can provide regional support to those areas most susceptible to

terrorism. We can refocus our attention to eradicating the leaders of

hate who use global networks to promote radicalism. And we can

strengthen our ability to develop multilateral approaches, reinvesting

in the idea that key alliances is the best way in which to bring about

democracy and stability throughout the world.

There are some who will argue that patriotism and criticism are

mutually exclusive. This is utterly false. Our strength of promoting

democracy, liberty, and freedom must be coupled with the wisdom of

recognizing our fallibility. The difference between those who believe

we must stay the course in Iraq and those who believe we must change

course lies not in degrees of patriotism but rather in truthful

disagreement over policy. Confusing the two leads only to division and

partisanship, and we must avoid at all costs to allow an issue of such

importance to be clouded with such rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, I was against our Nation going to war in Iraq, but at

every step of the way I have supported our men and women in uniform in

their mission. I have objected to the heavy-handed foreign policy of

this administration but have desired to see hope and progress for the

Iraqi people. And now I call for our troops in Iraq to be redeployed by

the end of the year.