Mr. Speaker, a little over 5 years ago I was on the

ground in Afghanistan and then returned with an Aircraft Carrier Battle

Group. I then took that Aircraft Carrier Battle Group into the Persian

Gulf for the precursor operations just before we began that war.

After that war had commenced, I returned to the ground in Afghanistan

18 months later for a short period of time and saw what had not been

done. We had accomplished so little compared to what might have been

because we diverted our attention and our resources from our Civil

Affairs Forces to our Special Operations Forces to the tragic

misadventure in Iraq.

I speak of Afghanistan because as it becomes prey to terrorists and

as the Taliban has moved back into the southern provinces, it is a

poster child for why I believe we must bring about a timetable for the

end of the war in Iraq.

That war has hurt U.S. security throughout this globe as well as here

at home, yet not one Army unit, Active, Reserve or Guard is in a state

of readiness that it could deploy anywhere in the world if another

contingency were to occur. Never mind that we are failing to engage

properly from the Western Pacific to Southeast Asia to the Middle East.

There is a change in our strategy that can bring about an end to this

tragedy without a failed state in Iraq. That is to set a date that is

certain by which we would redeploy out of Iraq, because a date certain

changes the structure of incentives within that region to change the

behavior of other

nations, in particular, Iran and Syria, that are involved destructively

in this conflict because we are, to their delight, bleeding, bleeding

profusely.

I asked when I was there with Senator Hagel, our highest political

officer there, does Iran want a failed state if we are to redeploy? His

response was no. Therefore, we must have the confidence to set a date

that is certain to redeploy out of Iraq, put our troops in Afghanistan,

remain in the region on our bases in Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, or Aircraft

Carrier Battle Group or Amphibious Ready Group, and bring others home,

so we don't degrade the readiness of our forces, but have the

competence to deal with Iran and Syria, bring them together with the

Iraqis as they deal with the extreme elements and we deal with the

middle.

There is a saying in the Middle East, ``Insha'Allah,'' basically,

``God willing tomorrow.'' Tomorrow for U.S. security has been enough. A

date certain, approximately a year, 9 months, to give those countries

time to work with us to bring about the political decisions that must

cease the civil war, to have the Iraqis step to the plate and assume

responsibility in the 32 ministries that thus far have been personal

fiefdoms for personal ambitions as we provide the political and

military cover for them to go about their personal pursuits. This is a

change that can only about be brought about not by doubling down on a

bad military bet by more troops, but by enforcing a date certain within

a timetable. And lastly, we should do so on an authorization bill.

We should never again put our troops between us and the President.

Being in the military is a dangerous business, but it doesn't have to

be unsafe. Our business in the military has the dignity of danger, but

you must provide them the bullets and the equipment they need to

protect themselves, while having an authorization bill provide the date

certain by which no forces in Iraq would remain, or funding for them to

remain would not be there.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the remainder of my time with the

understanding that there is a strategic approach to end this conflict

without a failed state in order to enhance U.S. security.