Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation

and yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, in Iraq today a misguided war is raging in our country's

name. We in this Congress and the American people across the country

are filled with admiration for the heroism and sacrifice of our

soldiers on the battlefield. But we cannot fathom the mindless

stubbornness of the administration fixated on illusory aids. It is

pathologically preoccupied with pursuing that despite all the evidence

of how destructive the situation has become.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen this movie before, quite literally, as any

classic film buff knows: ``The Bridge on the River Kwai,'' an Academy

Award-winning tale based on real events in World War II. Alec Guinness

plays a British colonel mesmerized and hypnotized by the goal of

building a bridge that will last through the ages even though doing so

will only strengthen the enemy. For a while Alec Guinness persuades his

fellow prisoners of war that completing his weird project will leave a

legacy of which they can be proud.

But it soon becomes clear that the real goal is to build a monument to

himself as he looks back on his few true achievements in life.

At one point this antihero tells his men, We can teach these

barbarians a lesson in Western methods and efficiency that will put

them to shame. Mr. Speaker, at this point the audience knows where the

real shame lies.

The American people know that what happens by our hand in Iraq will

be our legacy. We are no longer willing to tolerate keeping our sons

and daughters in the midst of a sectarian civil war. The war in Iraq

was launched by an administration using faulty intelligence and

mesmerized by a dream of some sort of monument to democracy in the

Middle East with Iraq at its center. It is past time to stop enabling

the construction of this folly.

The legislation before us directs that the redeployment of U.S.

forces in Iraq be carried out in a safe and orderly manner. It sets a

time certain by which that should start, and it is clearly intended to

bring about a major reduction in our troop presence by April of next

year. And in the meantime, our legislation will compel the

administration to come up with something which amazingly enough to date

it hasn't had: a comprehensive strategy for Iraq addressing our

national security interests not only there but in the entire region and

the ways to maintain our interests even as this redeployment is carried

out.

Mr. Speaker, today the administration issued its interim report on

the troop escalation in Iraq. Though the White House chooses to focus

on the benchmarks that have been met in what it calls a

``satisfactory'' way, the assessment, in fact, shows that Iraq has made

unsatisfactory progress on half of the 18 political and military goals

that Congress set for Iraq this spring.

The people of Iraq and our fighting forces there know the situation

all too well. The index of progress that they face each day tells them

much more than a 25-page report can ever say. With every car bomb that

takes a civilian toll, every insurgent's bullet that finds its mark,

every roadside explosive that maims or kills one of our own brave men

and women in uniform, the sacrifices mount; and the result is anything

but satisfactory.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, our measure deserves our full and

unwavering support. We need to direct a misguided administration to

face reality and to start the responsible redeployment of our forces

from Iraq. By asking this Congress to extend our patience yet again, by

pointlessly risking our troops, and by continuing to ignore the will of

the American people to end this war, the administration is reaching for

a bridge much too far.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, before yielding to our last speaker, I want

to express my disgust and outrage at this arrogance which we have just

heard.

The previous speaker assumes that there is a monopoly of virtue and

wisdom on one side. That is not the case.

We have listened to our colleagues on the other side with respect and

attention, and that is exactly what we demand of every single Member on

the Republican side. This was an appalling spectacle debasing what has

thus far been a fine and noble debate.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the conscience of

this House, my good friend from Georgia, Congressman John Lewis.