I thank the distinguished chairman of the Armed

Services Committee.

Mr. Speaker, two separate headlines on the front page of today's

Washington Post tell the sad story of two of the Bush Administration's

biggest national security failures. First, its disastrous Iraq policy,

and second, its failure to complete the mission against al Qaeda and

the Taliban along the Afghan/Pakistan border.

One headline reads, ``CIA Said Instability Appeared Irreversible.''

The article describes how, on the same day last November, the Baker-

Hamilton commission received two starkly different portrayals of what

was happening in Iraq. One came from President Bush, who portrayed a

rosy picture, and the other came from the man who President Bush put in

charge of the CIA, General Hayden, who was responsible for providing a

clear-eyed analysis based on cold facts. And what he reportedly told

the commission was, and I quote, ``Instability of the Iraqi Government

was irreversible.'' Irreversible, he said.

These starkly different portrayals of the situation go to the core of

our problems in Iraq because the President has been in a state of

denial. Happy talk is no substitute for a reality-based policy. And

indeed, the President's decisions based on wishful thinking have led to

decisions that have weakened our national security.

Yesterday, the U.S. intelligence experts confirmed the gloomy

assessment that General Hayden made last November, and today's report

to Congress confirms that the Iraqi Government has failed to make

sufficient progress in key areas of national reconciliation.

The other headline on the front page of the paper today on Washington

Post reads, ``U.S. warns of stronger al Qaeda and describes al Qaeda's

growing presence and strength along the Afghan/Pakistan border and

reveals the consequences of our failure to complete the job against al

Qaeda in that area.''

Mr. Speaker, we must insist that the Iraqis assume greater

responsibility for their own future, and we redouble our efforts

against those who did attack us on September 11, 2001. That's what this

bill is about.

It's time to change direction. I urge my colleagues to adopt this

bill.