Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise with great respect for the chairman of the Armed

Services Committee and the author of this bill, but with strong

opposition to H.R. 2956.

Mr. Speaker, the short title of this bill is the ``Responsible

Redeployment from Iraq Act.'' But, Mr. Speaker, this bill is not

responsible. It is irresponsible. This bill is an irresponsible

political act that will put our troops in danger and will result in

catastrophic consequences for the United States, for the Iraqi people,

for Israel, for the greater Middle Eastern region, and for the rest of

the world.

As The Washington Post said in this morning's paper, this bill is

being considered today for ``reasons having more to do with American

politics than with Iraqi reality.''

We must oppose this bill for numerous reasons, but let me mention

just three. First, this bill fails to highlight the consequences of

reducing our force levels too early. Such consequences would have a

devastating effect on Iraq, would embolden al Qaeda in Iran, and would

have severe security impacts on Israel and throughout the Middle East.

Al Qaeda and its proxies are engaged in a jihad against the United

States and against the West. Al Qaeda's second in command, al Zawahiri,

reaffirmed in a July 4 speech an al Qaeda plan to use Iraq, Afghanistan

and Somalia for jihadi planning and training against us.

Second, instead of putting forward legislation that offers an

alternative to the plan being implemented by General Petraeus and

Ambassador Crocker, this political ploy calls for a vague ``troop

reduction'' to be a ``limited presence'' in a ``safe and orderly

manner'' within 120 days; but it fails to define any of these terms.

Specifically, this bill does not define what ``limited presence''

means. Does it mean 50,000 troops or 100,000 troops or 137,000 troops?

What is a limited presence? No one knows. This is not a serious bill;

it is a political bill.

Third, the bill requires the President to address whether it is

necessary for our Armed Forces to carry out missions such as, listen to

this, protecting diplomatic facilities and U.S. citizens, whether it is

necessary to carry out acts like acting to disrupt or eliminate al

Qaeda, or if it is necessary to carry out acts including training and

equipping members of Iraqi security forces. Let me ask my friends on

the other side of the aisle, for goodness sake, what else would we do

there?

It is illogical to ask whether these missions are necessary and only

proves once again that this bill is a political tool and not an

alternative plan.

There are also two other points that my colleagues should consider.

First, the situation in Iraq is not conducive to a force reduction. As

an example of why this is true, the British have indicated their intent

to draw down and have pulled back to the Basra airport. And as a

result, Basra is now in the center of a power struggle between Shiite

elements and tribal leaders over control of oil and political power.

Local governance control has fractured along militia lines because of a

British redeployment like the ones we are talking about in this bill.

Second, we need to remind ourselves of what happened in Beirut and

Afghanistan when forces precipitously withdrew there. In October 1983,

our Marine barracks in Beirut was bombed by Hezbollah with support from

Iran. We withdrew our Marines in February 1984, and by that April, the

remainder of the peacekeeping force had followed. That civil war

continued until 1990 and Hezbollah emerged as a much stronger force,

which to this day threatens the West. We should ask ourselves: Could

the U.S. have prevented the rise of Hezbollah and the influence of

Tehran

had we not had a precipitous withdrawal like the one provided for in

this bill?

Second, in the 1980s, the Afghan resistance built momentum by

recruiting Muslim fighters to wage jihad against the Soviets. The

Soviet withdrawal of 1989 was followed by a civil war and the collapse

of the government. The Taliban rose in 1993 and gained control of

Afghanistan.

In 1996, bin-Laden moved to Afghanistan where he forged an alliance

between al-Qaeda and the Taliban. What followed were al-Qaeda attacks

on the WorId Trade Center, Khobar Towers, the embassies in Kenya and

Tanzania, the USS Cole, and then September 11th. My colleagues, ask

yourself this: ``Could the U.S. have prevented the rise of al-Qaeda by

responding to these threats?''

I want to urge my colleagues to keep in mind that the world is

watching how the United States handles this tough challenge in Iraq. If

we concede defeat and retreat, we will send a strong message of

weakness and inability to remain committed to our allies and to our

enemies.

Tom Friedman noted in the New York Times this week that our

withdrawal will mean ``more ethnic, religious and tribal killings

across Iraq,'' adding, ``it will be one of the most morally ugly scenes

you can imagine, no less than Darfur.'' The Post today also stated that

a withdrawal will result in a ``full-blown civil war, conflicts

spreading beyond Iraq's borders, or genocide.'' Picture the Iraqis who

have helped us, picture them watch as we prepare to leave and picture

them clinging to our vehicles in fear of their very lives as we start

down the road from Baghdad.

I believe this reckless abandonment of the mission in Iraq would send

a clear message to the Iraqi people, our allies, and potential partners

around the world that Americans are weak and cannot be trusted. In this

world of transnational terrorism and proliferation we can not afford to

stand alone.

It is critical that we give General Petraeus the months we gave him

to implement his strategy, and I urge my colleagues to vote against

this dangerous bill. In this case national security should trump

national politics.