Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 2956 which, while

a well-intended attempt to reduce our nation's seemingly unlimited

military commitment in Iraq, is in so many respects deeply flawed.

I have been one of the strongest opponents of military action against

Iraq. I voted against the initial authorization in 2002 and I have

voted against every supplemental appropriations bill to fund the war. I

even voted against the initial ``Iraq regime change'' legislation back

in 1998. I believe our troops should be brought back to the United

States without delay. Unfortunately, one of the reasons I oppose this

legislation is that it masquerades as a troop withdrawal measure but in

reality may well end up increasing U.S. commitments in the Middle East

Mr. Speaker, this is precisely the debate we should have had four

years ago, before Congress voted to abrogate its Constitutional

obligation to declare war and transfer that authority to the president.

Some in this body were rather glib in declaring the constitution

antiquated while voting to cede the ability to initiate hostilities to

the President. Now we see the result of ignoring the Constitution, and

we are bringing even more mayhem to the process with this legislation.

To those who believe this act would somehow end the war, I simply

point to the title for Section 3 of the bill, which states,

``Requirement to reduce the number of armed forces in Iraq and

transition to a limited presence of the Armed Forces in Iraq.'' However

the number of troops are limited, this legislation nevertheless will

permit an ongoing American military presence in Iraq with our soldiers

continuing to be engaged in hostilities.

I also wish to draw attention to Section 4(b)(1), which mandates the

President to submit a ``Strategy for Iraq'' by the beginning of next

year. This ``strategy'' is to include:

In other words, far from extricating ourselves from the debacle in

Iraq, this bill would set in motion a policy that could lead to a wider

regional commitment, both financially and militarily. Such a policy

would be disastrous for both our overextended national security forces

and beleaguered taxpayers. This could, in fact, amount to an

authorization for a region-wide ``surge.''

Congress' job is to change the policy on Iraq, not to tell the

military leaders how many troops they should have. I have attempted to

do this with H.R. 2605, a bill to sunset after a six month period the

authorization for military activity in Iraq. During this period a new

plan for Iraq could be discussed and agreed. Plan first, authorization

next, execution afterward. That is what we should be doing in Iraq.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, this legislation brings us no closer to

ending the war in Iraq. It brings us no closer to bringing our troops

home. It says nothing about withdrawal, only about redeployment. It

says nothing about reducing U.S. presence in the Middle East, and may

actually lead to an expanded U.S. presence in the region. We have no

guarantee the new strategy demanded by this legislation would not

actually expand our military activities to Iran and Syria and beyond. I

urge my colleagues to reject this legislation and put forth an

effective strategy to end the war in Iraq and to bring our troops home.