Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill to begin a

responsible redeployment of our forces now in Iraq. The defense of our

homeland is paramount and we are vulnerable for an attack. The war in

Iraq has damaged the readiness of our military. Our ability to defend

our Nation is at stake.

Today's report on benchmarks is further evidence that this

Administration can only see the situation in Iraq through rose-colored

glasses. It's time for serious policy makers--for American patriots--to

find a way out of Iraq so we can focus on defending our Nation against

al Qaeda, as well as other threats to national security.

This administration has no plan to defend the United States, and they

did great damage to the defense of this country with the ``catch and

release'' operation they had on our southern border. ``Catch and

release'' sent all non-Mexicans who came in illegally to the interior

of the Nation with a paper compelling them to return for deportation.

By virtue of ``catch and release'' we face the prospect of possibly

hundreds of cells already in country awaiting an attack order.

What happens if al Qaeda attacks a nuclear facility? Do we have a

plan for that? Who moves into defensive and containment posture? Do we

even have the troops presently in country to provide that defense and

containment?

What happens if there is an attack on a military base? There will be

military officials nearby, but how will they respond?

What happens if there is a bio-chemical attack in an American city?

Who responds--and how will our citizens be protected?

A shoulder launched weapon from a building top in New York,

Washington DC, or another major American city would be devastating . .

. and show our lack of preparation 6 years after 9/11 when many of us

ran from these buildings, not sure we would ever see them again.

Today's report about the resurgence of al Qaeda is no surprise for

us. Ever since Congress was deliberately misled by the President into

authorizing the Iraq war in 2002, the war in Iraq sucked precious

resources away from our focus on al Qaeda. When we invaded Iraq in

2003, the Iraq al Qaeda presence was in a single village in Kurdistan

along the Iranian border. Today, it is impossible to estimate the

number of al Qaeda fighters we have drawn to Iraq through our invasion.

We inadvertently aided al Qaeda through our invasion of Iraq by

giving al Qaeda a recruitment opportunity for radical Muslims

throughout the Middle East; giving al Qaeda the means to perfect urban

warfare; tying down our military in Iraq, giving al Qaeda space to grow

and operate, and most urgently, deeply damaging the readiness of the

U.S. military and making the U.S. less safe for ourselves and our

children.

At least one branch of this government must begin the painful process

of finding an ending to our involvement in a civil war we facilitated.

Many colleagues here seem to believe our withdrawal will leave behind

an even bloodier civil war. I agree; but that will be the case whenever

we leave there . . . be it today, tomorrow, next year, or a decade from

now. The only difference we can make in that regard is how many

American souls will die on the Iraqi battlefield between now and the

day our forces withdraw.

Others have pinned all hope on the fledgling Iraqi government seated

on March 16, 2005 . . . a government that has been unable to elect a

Speaker for their Parliament and rarely produces a quorum. We have lost

1,282 American soldiers during the same time.

Bear in mind, al Qaeda is not the only threat we face in the future .

. . North Korea, the militarization of South America . . . and many

other threats are a reality for this nation in the decade to come. We

must be prepared for all of them.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the adoption of this bill.