Let me just say that the Revolutionary War, my great-

great-grandfather fought in it. We fought our own war. In the Civil

War, I have my great-grandfather's hat in my office. He fought against

the South in the Civil War. We fought our own war. What we are trying

to do in this legislation is force the Iraqis to fight their own war.

That's what it's all about. Sixty-two Americans have died this month.

We want to force the Iraqis to fight their own war.

Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing people say that we have got

to give this a chance. For 4 years we have given this a chance. For 4

years we have had our troops overseas.

Here is the problem that we face. Every time that we give them a

chance, they disappear. For instance, they said that the Iraqis are

going to lead this surge. Let me tell you, 50 percent of the Iraqis in

the units aren't showing up. So the Americans have to take over. We

have to pay the bill.

The Europeans, this is just as important to the Europeans as it is to

us, and the Europeans benefit from the oil that comes from Iraq, yet

they are not really participating to any significant amount, versus the

first war where they participated significantly. George Bush I got a

coalition together.

The problem we have with what is going on, this is not General

Petraeus' war, this is the administration's war. This administration

has put us in a position where the military has to actually violate

their own guidelines in order to get troops to Iraq.

I knew over an a year ago we didn't have the numbers of troops we

needed to sustain this deployment, and the surge makes it worse. The

worst thing we can do is send troops, and if you vote against this, you

are going to vote for sending troops into war without being fully

mission-capable, without the training and equipment they need, and that

is absolutely unacceptable.

I note to the Congress and I note to the people sitting on that side

who worked so hard to fund the military, we put $70 billion in last

time that the administration did not even ask for.

We have 36,000 additional troops in here for the overall picture. So

if you vote against this, you are voting against those 36,000 troops,

for the total number of troops that need to be not deployed, but need

to be available to be deployed.

Our reserves are in desperate shape. Our Strategic Reserve, when we

started this war with C-1, they are now in the lowest state of

readiness. They couldn't be deployed. Only two divisions would be

deployed. So we have a lot of work to do.

And I say to the Members, you are voting against supporting the

troops if you vote against the money that goes to the troops and the

money that has already been sent or is going to be sent. They are going

to run out in April, and we need to get this bill through.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Members on both sides of the aisle to vote

for this legislation.

Let me tell you what is in this bill and what you are

voting against. There is $1.7 billion of this bill request for military

health care. If you vote against this bill, you are denying our troops

$1.7 billion.

There is $450 million for post-traumatic stress. There is $450

million for brain injury care. It is insufficient, but that is the

money we put in the bill; $62 million for amputee care at Walter Reed,

$20 million to fix up Walter Reed. That is what is in this bill for

health care.

If you vote against this bill, the military families will be denied

$17 million to help prevent child-spouse abuse.

The bill increases accountability over contractors. When I was in

Iraq a month and a half ago, the contractors were falling all over each

other. GAO and the inspector general of Iraq said to us, help us get

this under control. I asked or one of the Members in the subcommittee

asked the GAO what we could do to help. And I asked the Under Secretary

of Defense: How many contractors do you have in Iraq? He couldn't tell

me. He said, we will tell you within a week. We still haven't heard,

and that has been over a month ago. We have had 11 hearings, and we are

going to have 35 more hearings before this year is over. We are going

to hold the Department of Defense accountable for the money that they

are spending and the strategy that they are using.

This bill bans permanent bases in Iraq. This bill bans torture in

Iraq. We have sent troops to Iraq that were not trained in their

specific MOSs, and that is exactly why Abu Ghraib happened. We had

people that were untrained, National Guard members who were untrained

who went into that prison, didn't know how to handle it, and it caused

a natural disaster, a public relations disaster.

The way the military is doing the job, and there is nobody that

regards the military higher than I do. Nobody is more inspired by the

troops that I have talked to and I have seen. But let me tell you

something. With the type of tactics that they have to use, by knocking

down doors and by using overwhelming force, it makes enemies. That is

the problem we have, and we are not winning the hearts and minds of the

people when we do that.

Let me talk about the readiness of our troops. Every unit in the

United States, except two National Guard units, went into this war with

the highest state of readiness. Now, there are only two units in the

United States that are at the highest state of readiness.

This provides money to take care of that. If you vote against that,

you are voting against money to take care of readiness for our

strategic reserve.

Let me tell you what General Craddock says. General Craddock is the

European commander, the NATO commander, American commander. Listen to

what I am saying. This is what General Craddock says: ``We have very

little capacity left after we source the global force pool, if you

will, for these ongoing European Command missions. Our ability to do

that now is limited because we don't have the forces available since

they are in the rotation to the other missions.''

He is saying what I have been saying for a year and a half. This is a

failed policy wrapped in illusion. We do not have the troops. We do not

have a strategic reserve to be able to react to a future national

threat to this great country. The troops can only do so much.

This bill includes $1.4 billion for new armored vehicles. If you vote

against this, you are voting against the new armored vehicles which we

need so badly. We put an extra $313 million above what the Defense

Department requested for those vehicles. That is the V-shaped vehicles

which resist the IEDs. If you vote against this bill, you will be

denying the troops better protection and better equipment.

The bill also includes billions to reset the forces. What I have been

saying is the equipment, somebody said the other day, well, they train

on old equipment. Well, why does that mean anything? Those of you who

have been in the military knows what it means. It means when you go

into combat, you do not have the type of equipment you need. You are

risking the lives of these people by training on inadequate equipment.

We have two units that will not go to the desert because they have to

rush them out over to Iraq.

It is not the military's fault. The administration has forced the

military to break their own guidelines in order to send troops over to

supply this surge and to sustain this deployment.

Finally, we are saying in this bill, you cannot send troops back into

battle unless they have the appropriate training, they are fully

trained, mission capable. Is there anybody that is going to vote

against that? If you vote against this bill, you vote against that. If

you vote against this bill, you vote against sending troops back in

less than a year at home. That is unacceptable.

You can sit here and say we are fighting this war, oh, yes, you can

sit here in Washington and say you are fighting this war. But let me

tell you something, those young people sometimes went back three and

four times; their families are suffering. These are not 140,000 people.

These are each individuals with families and relatives that are bearing

the brunt of this fighting that are sent back.

This bill forces the administration to live up to the guidelines they

have set for their military and not to extend them. A psychologist told

us in a hearing that if you spend 3 months in combat that there is a

good chance you will start to develop PTSD three months in this

intensive combat in Baghdad.

Now, you can sit here and talk about us fighting this war on

terrorism. We put an extra billion dollars for Afghanistan in this bill

so we could fight terrorism where it started in Afghanistan. That is

where it started.

Let me tell you something. We set benchmarks. We set benchmarks

because it has not worked. Every time something happens over there,

what he says is, well, we will send American troops; we will send

American troops

back before they have their time at home. We will extend American

troops. The Iraqis have to start to bear this responsibility for

themselves, and that is why we are putting it in the bill.

The American people in the last election sent a message. They said we

want the Iraqis to solve their own problems in Iraq. The Americans have

borne the brunt. We are spending $8.4 billion a month, $2 billion to

get people and equipment and supplies over to Iraq, $2 billion a month,

8,000 miles away.

I will tell you what hurts the troops; I will tell you what hurts

them. It hurts them when they extend it beyond 13 months or the

marines, beyond 7 months. What hurts the troops, if you send the troops

back before they have a year at home. That is what hurts the morale of

the troops. I am the person that found the 44,000 shortage of body

armor in the initial invasion of Iraq. We had troops in danger because

they did not have the equipment they needed. We cannot send troops back

into combat without equipment and fully being trained.

Let me just say this in the end. My grandfather's Civil War hat is in

my office. He lost his arm in the Civil War fighting for the North,

some of you Southerners here. My great-grandmother lived to be 96. I

was 6-years-old when she died. She said you are on this Earth to make a

difference. We are going to make a difference with this bill. We are

going to bring those troops home. We are going to start changing the

direction of this great country.

Mr. Speaker and distinguished Members of this body, the United States

currently has 145,000 troops on the ground in Iraq and over half a

trillion dollars has been expended in the war. More than 3,200 of our

sons and daughters have lost their lives and close to 25,000 have been

wounded; hundreds with amputated limbs and thousands with traumatic

brain injuries.

The Pentagon reports that the Iraqi Security Forces have grown in

number, reaching their goal of 325,000 trained and equipped. The Iraqis

have a Constitution and have held national elections. These milestones

have been met, yet lack of security and stability continues. The war in

Iraq has been plagued by mischaracterization based on unrealistic

optimism instead of realism. Reality dictates that conditions on the

ground are simply moving in the wrong direction.

There are limits to military power. There is no U.S. military

solution to Iraq's civil war. It is up to the Iraqis.

Beginning in May 2005, after two years of mischaracterizations and

misrepresentations by this Administration, the Defense Appropriations

subcommittee required the Department of Defense to submit quarterly

reports to Congress on the facts necessary to measure stability and

security in Iraq. Since July 2005, we have received these reports. They

are dismal and demonstrate a clear lack of progress in vital areas of

concern. Electricity, oil production, employment and potable water

remain at woeful levels.

The average weekly attacks have grown from 430 in July 2005 to well

over 1000 today. In fact, attacks throughout the country have increased

10 percent over the last 4 months. Iraqi casualties have increased from

63 per day in October 2005 to over 125 per day.

Recent polls show that more than six in 10 Iraqis now say their lives

are going badly, double the percentage who said so in late 2005. Sixty-

nine percent of the Iraqis surveyed said the presence of U.S. forces in

the country makes the overall security situation worse. In January

2006, 47 percent of Iraqis approved of attacks on U.S.-led forces. When

the same polling question was asked just 8 months later, 61 percent of

Iraqis approved of attacks on U.S-led forces.

The support of the American public continues to erode and there is

little confidence in the current strategy. Today less than 30 percent

of Americans approve of the way the President is handling the war, and

only 11 percent support the President's plan to increase troop levels

in Iraq. A February 2006 poll showed that 72 percent of American troops

serving in Iraq believed the U.S. should exit Iraq within the year and

42 percent said their mission was unclear.

Wars cannot be won with slogans. There must be a clear and reachable

plan and a defined way to measure the success of that plan. The

President says he has a new plan for a way forward in Iraq. General

Peter Schoomaker, Chief of the United States Army, said in a recent

hearing that in order for a plan to be effective we ``have to be able

to measure the purpose.'' But the President sets forth a plan with no

defined matrices for measuring progress and no consequences if progress

is not made. This new plan is simply more of the same open ended

commitment in Iraq that has not worked.

A new strategy that is based on redeployment rather than further U.S.

military engagement, and one that is centered on handing Iraq back to

the Iraqis, is what is needed. I do not believe that Iraq will make the

political progress necessary for its security and stability until U.S.

forces redeploy.

In order to achieve stability in Iraq and the Region, I recommend:

(1) The redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq

(2) The execution of a robust diplomatic effort and the restoration

of our international credibility

(3) The repairing of our military readiness and the rebuilding of our

strategic reserve to face future threats.

To achieve stability and security in Iraq, I believe we first must

have a responsible phased redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq.

General William Odom (U.S. Army, Retired) recently testified, ``We are

pursuing the wrong war.''

Stability and security in the Region should be our overarching

strategy, not a ``victory in Iraq.'' I agree with General Odom and

believe that Regional Stability can only be accomplished through the

redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq.

Who wants us to stay in Iraq? In my opinion, Iran and Al Qaeda,

because we intensify the very radical extremism we claim to be fighting

against, while at the same time depleting our financial and human

resources.

As long as the U.S. military continues to occupy Iraq, there will be

no real security. Maintaining U.S. troop strength in Iraq or adding to

the strength in specified areas, has not proven effective in the past

nor do I believe it will work in the future. The Iraq war cannot be won

by the U.S. military, predominantly because of the way our military

operates. They use overwhelming force, which I advocate to save

American lives, but it is counter to winning the hearts and minds of

the people.

I recommend the phased redeployment of U.S. forces, first from

Saddam's palaces, then from the green zone. Next, from the prime real

estate of Iraq's major cities, out of the factories and universities,

and finally out of the country all together. We need to give

communities back to the Iraqis so they can begin to self govern, begin

economic recovery and return to some type of normality. I recommend the

adoption of a U.S. policy that encourages and rewards reconstruction

and regional investment and one that is dictated and administered not

by the United States, but by the Iraqis themselves.

I believe that a responsible redeployment from Iraq is the first step

necessary in restoring our tarnished international credibility. Since

the U.S. invasion of Iraq, our international credibility, even among

allies, has plummeted. Stability in Iraq is important not only to the

United States, but it is important to the Region and to the entire

world. The BBC recently released a poll showing that nearly three-

quarters of those polled in 25 countries disapprove of U.S. policies

toward Iraq. More than two-thirds said the U.S. military presence in

the Middle East does more harm than good. Just 29 percent of

respondents said the United States has a general positive influence in

the world, down from 40 percent two years ago.

In order to restore international credibility, I believe it is

necessary for the U.S. to completely denounce any aspirations of

building permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq; I believe we should

shut down the Guantanamo detention facility; and we must bulldoze the

Abu Ghraib prison. We must clearly articulate and demonstrate a policy

of ``no torture, no exceptions'' and directly engage countries in the

region with dialogue instead of directives. This includes allies as

well as our perceived adversaries.

Our annual Defense spending budget is currently in excess of $450

billion. Above this amount, we are spending $8.4 billion dollars a

month in the war in Iraq and yet our strategic reserve is in desperate

shape. While we are fighting an asymmetric threat in the short term, we

have weakened our ability to respond to what I believe is a grave long

term conventional and nuclear threat.

At the beginning of the Iraq war, 80 percent of ALL Army units and

almost 100 percent of active combat units were rated at the highest

state of readiness. Today, virtually all of our active-duty combat

units at home and ALL of our guard units are at the lowest state of

readiness, primarily due to equipment shortages resulting from repeated

and extended deployments to Iraq. In recent testimony given by a high

ranking Pentagon official it was reported that our country is

threatened because we lack readiness at home.

Our Army has no strategic reserve, and while it is true that the U.S.

Navy and the U.S.

Air Force can be used to project power, there is a limit to what they

can achieve. Overall, our military remains capable of projecting power,

but we must also be able to sustain that projection, and in this regard

there is no replacement for boots on the ground.

We must make it a national priority to re-strengthen our military and

to repair readiness. I advocate an increase in overall troop strength.

The current authorized level is below what I believe is needed to

maintain an optimal military. In recent testimony to the Defense

Subcommittee that I chair, the Army and Marine Corps Commanders

testified that they could not continue to sustain the current

deployment practices without an adverse effect on the health and well-

being of service members and their families.

For decades, the Army operated on a deployment policy that for every

one year of deployment, two years were spent at home. This was

considered optimal for re-training, re-equipping and re-constituting.

Without relief, the Army will be forced to extend deployments to Iraq

to over one year in country and will be forced to send troops back with

less than one year at home. The Army reported that a 9-month deployment

was preferable. Medical experts testified that in intensive combat,

deployments of over 3 months increased the likelihood for service

members to develop post traumatic stress disorders. A recent report by

the Harvard University School of Government put the total cost of

providing medical care and disability benefits to veterans of Iraq and

Afghanistan at $350 to $700 billion.

We must invest in the health and well being of our service members by

providing for the right amount of troops and for appropriate deployment

and rotation cycles. Our military equipment inventories are

unacceptably low. The Services report that at least $100 billion more

is needed to get them back to ready state. In doing so, we must not

neglect investment in military technologies of the future. While we

remain bogged down in Iraq, the size and sophistication of other

militaries are growing. We must not lose our capability to deter future

threats.

Let me conclude by saying historically, whether it was India, Algeria

or Afghanistan, foreign occupations do not work, and in fact incite

civil unrest. Our military remains the greatest military in the world,

but there are limits to its ability to control a population that

considers them occupiers.

I have said this before and I continue to say that there are

essentially only two plans. One is to continue an occupation that has

not worked and that has shown no progress toward stabilization. The

other, which I advocate, is to end the occupation of Iraq, redeploy and

re-strengthen our military and turn Iraq over to the Iraqis.