Mr. Speaker, I want to voice my support for this

supplemental, not because I agree with everything in it, but because I

agree with the most important thing in it: a binding deadline to

redeploy our troops from Iraq.

We need to redeploy our troops from Iraq, first and foremost, because

it is in our national security interest.

As someone who voted for the original resolution, I am particularly

pained by the suffering of the thousands of our service members killed

and tens of thousands wounded. I'm glad this bill begins to put the

appropriate resources into caring for those coming home with traumatic

brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder, and beginning to fix

the problems at Walter Reed Medical Center and other facilities. It is

outrageous that this Administration has allowed our uniformed men and

women to be treated so shabbily.

I also have enormous sympathy for the families of service members

killed and injured in Iraq. I agonize about those on the home front who

worry every day about getting that horrible visit, and who struggle to

raise children, pay bills, and lead some semblance of normal life with

family members in a combat zone. I want our troops to come home.

Yet the hardships they and their families endure are not the reason

to bring our troops home. I know that the men and women in uniform, and

the families behind them, are willing to make the sacrifices they do if

that is what it takes to make America more secure.

But the truth is, this war is not making us more secure.

By manipulating the intelligence and rushing to war, ignoring our

allies, grossly mismanaging the occupation, and basing this entire war

on ideology and hope rather than expertise and pragmatism, the

Administration has torn our national security fabric.

Staying in Iraq, policing their civil war, does not bring us closer

to defeating the global network of extremists who wish to harm us. To

the contrary, in order to improve national security and best address

our other strategic interests around the world and here at home, we

must dramatically change our current direction in Iraq.

Redeployment from Iraq will enhance our security by allowing us to

properly address other potential challenges around the world, from

Afghanistan, North Korea, and Iran to the Western Pacific, the Horn of

Africa, and the greater Middle East. In particular, it will allow us to

put our attention back on Afghanistan and Pakistan and the fight

against a resurgent al Qaeda and Taliban, the enemies who actually

engineered 9/11.

Bringing troops home also allows us to resolve the concerns about the

readiness of our Armed Forces, which have been strained to the breaking

point because of this Administration's careless management of the war

in Iraq.

Perhaps most importantly, only by extricating ourselves from the mess

of Iraq can we begin moving our country back to a common-sense policy

of strength through leadership. Every day our military is in Iraq our

standing in the international community erodes further.

Already we've seen respect for the United States plunge from record

highs after 9/11 to record lows now. This loss of moral authority

compromises our ability to lead multinational efforts to fight national

security threats from terrorism and nuclear proliferation to global

wanning and drug trafficking.

We cannot begin rebuilding our international credibility and

leadership until we have redeployed from Iraq. We cannot restore the

flexibility to meet the real, potentially existential threats of

nuclear terrorism that were used to justify the invasion of Iraq until

we exit Iraq.

We hear dire warnings about the awful results if we leave Iraq. It is

true that bad things may happen when our Armed Forces leave if the

Iraqis cannot or will not choose reconciliation over conflict. But that

will be true if we leave at the end of this year, the end of next year,

or in 2015. Delaying redeployment only delays the Iraqis' moment of

responsibility.

The sooner we begin redeployment, the sooner we begin unraveling the

tremendous damage that this war and its mismanagement have wrought on

our national security. Given the Administration's history of

manipulation and deceit, the interim deadlines of December 2007 and

March 2008 may not prove binding, since the President can make

certifications that waive those deadlines. I will support this

supplemental, however, because it does set a binding deadline on

withdrawal no later than August of next year. I would like the deadline

to be sooner, but most important is that we bring finality to this war.

Our men and women in uniform have served our country courageously and

performed brilliantly--just as they always do. But asking them to stand

between warring factions is not only unfair, it's counterproductive.

I believe in a strong U.S. engagement around the world, including

using military force when necessary. I also believe, as did Presidents

Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Reagan, that America's greatest

strength comes from its values and its ability to lead. We need to

restore America's leadership. We need to strengthen America's security.

We need to pass this supplemental and begin the redeployment from Iraq.