Mr. Speaker, the debate taking place here in the House

this week is long overdue. We are approaching our fifth year of this

war, and this is the first time Congress is debating the strategy

President Bush wants to implement in Iraq.

Congress can no longer stand on the sidelines, and the President has

to know that to escalate the war in Iraq is simply not acceptable. We

have lost too many American lives, seen too many soldiers seriously

injured and spent too much of our hard-earned taxpayer money for no

good reason. I am proud of my vote against the initial Iraq war

resolution, and see this resolution before us tonight as the beginning

of the end to U.S. military involvement in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this evening to commend our troops

for the valiant work they have done over the last 5 years. I am

thinking of them when I voice my strong opposition to the President's

plan to send 21,500 additional troops to Iraq.

The President hopes this troop escalation plan will secure Baghdad

and reduce the sectarian violence that is ripping the country apart.

But there is no evidence to support those hopes.

In fact, on four different occasions the President increased troop

levels in Iraq, and every time these plans failed to calm the violence

in Iraq. Last summer the President moved more troops into Baghdad and

said that he hoped to see some results in a matter of months. By

October, General William Caldwell had publicly stated that the surge

was a failure and the operations had ``not met our overall expectations

of sustaining a reduction in the levels of violence.''

Additional troops are not going to make a difference because there

simply is not a military solution to the war in Iraq. The devastating

sectarian violence is going to continue, but our troops should no

longer be asked to serve as referees in a battle between religious

sects that have been fighting for centuries.

Mr. Speaker, many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle

claim that if you speak out against the President's proposal, you are

not supporting our troops, and this is nonsense. And if they listened

to the troops, they would know that not even a majority of our troops

support the President's plan. According to a poll conducted by Army

Times, a weekly newspaper popular with Active Duty and retired Army

personnel, only 41 percent of our troops support the President's plan.

But they will do whatever is asked of them, regardless of whether or

not they agree with the command.

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the war, our troops fought without

the body armor they needed to protect themselves against improvised

electronic devices. It now appears that the military doesn't have the

protective equipment needed to properly outfit the troops the President

plans to send to Iraq. According to the Army, it lacks not only armor

kits for soldiers, but also trucks and vehicles needed to accommodate

any escalation in troop levels. Lieutenant General Steven Speaks, the

Army's deputy chief of staff for force development, said any additional

units of troops sent to Iraq would have to share the trucks assigned to

the units now there.

Do supporters of this plan really believe this Congress should allow

the President to move ahead without properly investigating whether or

not our troops will have all the necessary protective equipment they

need?

Mr. Speaker, we also need to realistically look at the distraction

that the Iraq war is causing in the overall war against terror. While

the administration and the Pentagon focus their attention on Iraq, the

war in Afghanistan has been forgotten. The Taliban has significantly

grown in strength in Afghanistan, and America needs to focus its

attention there, the source of the attacks on 9/11.

Mr. Speaker, I opposed this war from the very beginning, and want to

see our troops home. The President should be putting forth a plan for

withdrawal from Iraq, not escalation. I am willing to vote to cut off

funding for the escalation. I have voted against the Iraq supplemental

appropriation bills to send a message that we need to end U.S. military

involvement in Iraq. With this resolution, we begin the process of

getting out of a place where we should never have been from the

beginning.