I thank you very much. I know this is a

Special Order that has drawn the interest of Members from vast regions

around America.

The important thing is we are Americans, that we want what is best

for America, and that is why the Congress created the Baker Commission,

not for it to be partisan but for it to be bipartisan, for it to have

experts from around the Nation. To my great disappointment, the

President stood up, ignored the Congress, the people, the experts, the

military experts, and the wisdom that would indicate that it is time

now to redeploy our troops.

This is a Martin Luther King moment. His birthday will be celebrated

this coming Monday. Martin Luther King was courageous enough, as my

colleague from Minnesota just said, to have the courage to go against

the Vietnam War, realizing it was better to have peace over war and

life over death.

The President laid out last night an Iraqi-dependent policy for

America. They have, in essence, called upon the American people to

depend upon this failed government to be the source of our strategy in

Baghdad. We now will send some 20,000-plus troops to engage in a nine-

district process of dragging people out of their homes on the premise

of utilizing Iraqi soldiers and security forces. My question to the

President is: Why did we not do this before?

Let me say in closing that I want a peaceful solution. I did not vote

for the war, but I believe in our military. I believe in America and

democracy. Bring the allies to the table in the region, have a

political diplomacy, and have our troops backup the Iraqis. We cannot

have a foreign policy dependent upon Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to speak on the most critical

issue facing our country, the war in Iraq. This misguided, mismanaged,

and costly debacle was preemptively launched by President Bush in March

2003 despite the opposition of me and 125 other members of the House.

To date, the war in Iraq has lasted longer than America's involvement

in World War II, the greatest conflict in all of human history.

The Second World War ended in complete and total victory for the

United States and its allies. But then again, in that conflict America

was led by a great Commander-in-Chief who had a plan to win the war and

secure the peace, listened to his generals, and sent troops in

sufficient numbers and sufficiently trained and equipped to do the job.

Mr. Speaker, I say with sadness that we have not that same quality of

leadership throughout the conduct of the Iraq War. The results, not

surprisingly, have been disastrous. To date, the war in Iraq has

claimed the lives of 3,015 brave servicemen and women (115 in December

and 13 in the first 9 days of this month). More than 22,000 Americans

have been wounded, many suffering the most horrific injuries. American

taxpayers have paid nearly $400 billion to sustain this misadventure.

Based on media reports, tonight President Bush will not be offering

any new strategy for success in Iraq, just an increase in force levels

of 20,000 American troops. This reported plan will not provide lasting

security for Iraqis. It is not what the American people have asked for,

nor what the American military needs. It will impose excessive and

unwarranted burdens on military personnel and their families.

Mr. Speaker, the architects of the fiasco in Iraq would have us

believe that ``surging'' at least 20,000 more soldiers into Baghdad and

nearby Anbar province is a change in military strategy that America

must embrace or face future terrorist attacks on American soil. Nothing

could be further from the truth, as we learned last year when the

``surge'' idea first surfaced among neoconservatives.

Mr. Speaker, the troop surge the President will announce tonight is

not new and, judging from history, will not work. It will only succeed

in putting more American troops in harm's way for no good reason and

without any strategic advantage. The armed forces of the United States

are not to be used to respond to 911 calls from governments like Iraq's

that have done all they can to take responsibility for the security of

their country and safety of their own people. The United States cannot

do for Iraq what Iraqis are not willing to do for themselves.

Troop surges have been tried several times in the past. The success

of these surges has, to put it charitably, been underwhelming. Let's

briefly review the record:

Mr. Speaker, stemming the chaos in Iraq, however, requires more than

opposition to military escalation. It requires us to make hard choices.

Our domestic national security, in fact, rests on redeploying our

military forces from Iraq in order to build a more secure Middle East

and continue to fight against global terrorist networks elsewhere in

the world. Strategic redeployment of our armed forces in order to

rebuild our nation's fighting capabilities and renew our critical fight

in Afghanistan against the Taliban and al-Qaeda is not just an

alternative strategy. It's a strategic imperative.

Mr. Speaker, it is past time for a new direction that can lead to

success in Iraq. We cannot wait any longer. Too many Americans and

Iraqis are dying who could otherwise be saved.

I believe the time has come to debate, adopt, and implement the

Murtha Plan for strategic redeployment. I am not talking about

``immediate withdrawal,'' ``cutting and running,'' or surrendering to

terrorists, as the architects of the failed Administration Iraq policy

like to claim. And I certainly am not talking about staying in Iraq

forever or the foreseeable future.

I am talking about a strategic redeployment of troops that: Reduces

U.S. troops in Iraq to 60,000 within six months, and to zero by the end

of 2007, while redeploying troops to Afghanistan, Kuwait, and the

Persian Gulf. Engages in diplomacy to resolve the conflict within Iraq

by convening a Geneva Peace Conference modeled on the Dayton Accords.

Establishes a Gulf Security initiative to deal with

the aftermath of U.S. redeployment from Iraq and the growing nuclear

capabilities of Iran. Puts Iraq's reconstruction back on track with

targeted international funds. Counters extremist Islamic ideology

around the globe through long-term efforts to support the creation of

democratic institutions and press freedoms.

As the Center for American Progress documents in its last quarterly

report (October 24, 2006), the benefits of strategic redeployment are

significant: Restore the strength of U.S. ground troops. Exercise a

strategic shift to meet global threats from Islamic extremists. Prevent

U.S. troops from being caught in the middle of a civil war in Iraq.

Avert mass sectarian and ethnic cleansing in Iraq. Provide time for

Iraq's elected leaders to strike a power-sharing agreement. Empower

Iraq's security forces to take control. Get Iraqis fighting to end the

occupation to lay down their arms. Motivate the U.N., global, and

regional powers to become more involved in Iraq. Give the U.S. the

moral, political, and military power to deal with Iran's attempt to

develop nuclear weapons. Prevent an outbreak of isolationism in the

United States.

Mr. Speaker, rather than surging militarily for the third time in a

year, the president should surge diplomatically. A further military

escalation would simply mean repeating a failed strategy. A diplomatic

surge would involve appointing an individual with the stature of a

former secretary of state, such as Colin Powell or Madeleine Albright,

as a special envoy. This person would be charged with getting all six

of Iraq's neighbors--Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and

Kuwait--involved more constructively in stabilizing Iraq. These

countries are already involved in a bilateral, self-interested and

disorganized way.

While their interests and ours are not identical, none of these

countries wants to live with an Iraq that, after our redeployment,

becomes a failed state or a humanitarian catastrophe that could become

a haven for terrorists or a hemorrhage of millions more refugees

streaming into their countries.

The high-profile envoy would also address the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict, the role of Hezbollah and Syria in Lebanon, and Iran's rising

influence in the region. The aim would not be necessarily to solve

these problems, but to prevent them from getting worse and to show the

Arab and Muslim world that we share their concerns about the problems

in this region.

Mr. Speaker, the President's plan has not worked. Doing the same

thing over and over and expecting a different result is, as we all

know, a definition of insanity. It is time to try something new. It is

time for change. It is time for a new direction.