Mr. Speaker, I am deeply concerned about the current

situation in Iraq, as are the vast majority of Americans. We need an

honest assessment from the civilian leadership at the Pentagon about

what is working and what is not working, and what needs to change in

terms of our strategy.

I strongly oppose efforts to weaken the position of our military by

setting an arbitrary deadline for withdrawal of our military forces. We

all want American troops to return home from Iraq as soon as possible.

Some Members of Congress have called for an immediate withdrawal from

Iraq--I disagree with them.

As a longtime supporter of our military, I believe that a calendar-

based date for withdrawal serves as a rallying point for insurgents. It

also places a target on the backs of American troops. Finally, I am

very concerned that the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops would leave

a volatile vacuum of power in Iraq, which would rapidly be filled by

insurgents. A better alternative is for Congress to clearly delineate

the conditions that, if met, would permit a U.S. withdrawal.

Standing around arguing about why we're in this position doesn't

serve a good purpose, in my opinion. Instead, I think today's debate is

an opportunity to talk about how we can develop a strategy for success.

Regardless of when the last American soldier leaves Iraq, I want to be

able to look at him or her and be able to say that the service of our

military achieved something greater than the political ends of a few

here in Washington. I hope all of my colleagues share that desire. A

strategy for success should be comprehensive--it should include not

just a military role, but also a plan for political, diplomatic, and

economic success.

In the next few weeks, a field artillery unit from my district--the

222nd--is heading home after a long year in Iraq. These soldiers have

made immense sacrifices on behalf of our great Nation and I am so

grateful that they're going to be back in Utah. We all have

constituents serving overseas and I would like to take this opportunity

to sincerely thank our military service members for their work on

behalf of all Americans.