Mr. President, today in Iraq we sadly find ourselves at

the very point I feared when I opposed giving the President the open-

ended authority to wage this war in 2002, an occupation of undetermined

length and undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences in the

midst of a country torn by civil war.

The American people have waited. The American people have been

patient. We have given chance after chance for a resolution that has

not come and, more importantly, watched with horror and grief at the

tragic loss of thousands of brave young American soldiers.

The time for waiting in Iraq is over. The days of our open-ended

commitment must come to a close. The need to bring this war to an end

is here.

That is why today I am introducing the Iraq War De-escalation Act of

2007. This plan would not only place a cap on the number of troops in

Iraq and stop the escalation; more importantly, it would begin a phased

redeployment of United States forces with the goal of removing all

United States combat forces from Iraq by March 31, 2008, consistent

with the expectations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group that the

President has so assiduously ignored.

The redeployment of troops to the United States, Afghanistan, and

elsewhere in the region would begin no later than May 1 of this year,

toward the end of the timeframe I first proposed in a speech more than

2 months ago.

In a civil war where no military solution exists, this redeployment

remains our best leverage to pressure the Iraqi Government to achieve

the political settlement between its warring factions, that can slow

the bloodshed and promote stability. My plan allows for a limited

number of United States troops to remain as basic force protection, to

engage in counterterrorism, and to continue the training of Iraqi

security forces.

If the Iraqis are successful in meeting the 13 benchmarks for

progress laid out by the Bush administration itself, this plan also

allows for the temporary suspension of the redeployment, provided

Congress agrees that the benchmarks have actually been met and that the

suspension is in the national security interest of the United States.

The United States military has performed valiantly and brilliantly in

Iraq. Our troops have done all we have asked them to do and more, but

no amount of American soldiers can solve the political differences at

the heart of somebody else's civil war, nor settle the grievances in

the hearts of the combatants.

It is my firm belief that the responsible course of action for the

United States, for Iraq and for our troops, is to oppose this reckless

escalation and to pursue a new policy. This policy I have laid out is

consistent with what I have advocated for well over a year, with many

of the recommendations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, and with

what the American people demanded in the November election.

When it comes to the war in Iraq, the time for promises and

assurances, for waiting and for patience, is over. Too many lives have

been lost and too many billions of dollars have been spent for us to

trust the President on another tired and failed policy that is opposed

by generals and experts, Democrats and Republicans, Americans, and many

of the Iraqis themselves.

It is time for us to fundamentally change our policy. It is time to

give the Iraqis back their country. And it is time to refocus America's

efforts on the challenges we face at home and the wider struggle

against terror yet to be won.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.