I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 533 provides for consideration of H.R. 2956, the

Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, under a closed rule. The rule

provides 4 hours of debate, with 3 hours equally divided and controlled

by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed

Services and 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the Committee on

Foreign Affairs. The rule waives all points of order against the bill

and its consideration except those arising under clause 9 or 10 under

rule XX. The rule provides for one motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear about what we will be told today by

the President. We will be told that adequate progress has been made in

some areas of Iraq but more work needs to be done in others. What this

really means, of course, is that once again security and political

benchmarks have not been met, that vast areas in Baghdad that were

supposed to be under control by now are not, that a drop in violence in

some areas has been met with increases in violence elsewhere, that

political compromises are not being made with sufficient speed by the

Iraqi leadership, nor is there any available evidence that the

situation is going to change, that the escalation will suddenly become

more effective next week or next month. Instead, all signs indicate

that in September when General Petraeus reports to Congress, he will

deliver the exact same message that we are hearing today: to be

patient.

But patience means nothing when deadlines are constantly moved. In

January a leading Member of the minority said that we would be able to

tell in a few months if the escalation was working. Now we hear it is

still too early to tell. It has been 7 months. Which prediction are we

supposed to believe?

As time has advanced, an absence in progress has not been met by an

absence in tragedy. At the present rates, between now and September,

another 200 Americans will be killed, 200 more families changed

forever. And hundreds, if not thousands, more innocent Iraqis will have

died as well.

We will hear today that to change our course in Iraq will signal

defeat. But this willfully ignores the entire history of the Iraq War.

After more than 4 years of relentless conflict, including recent months

of historically high troop numbers, experts tell us that in Iraq al

Qaeda is stronger than ever. A military official told ABC News

yesterday al Qaeda's ``operational capability appears to be

undiminished.''

The conclusion is clear: The American military is not being given a

chance to bring peace to Iraq or to fight our enemies, not because our

troops are not good enough but because the current mission is

inherently flawed.

It is not weakness to admit a strategy is not working and to change

it. It is the very opposite: a sign of strength. Our leaders corrected

failing courses when they arose during the Civil War and during World

War II. Why should this war be different?

What Democrats are calling for today is not a retreat. It is not a

surrender. It is a statement that Congress will not wait for another

ambiguous so-called progress report and will not give the

administration another chance to move the goalposts. Instead, we will

refuse to needlessly sacrifice our soldiers, weaken our military,

undermine our national security, and bleed our country in ways that

even the worst terrorists could ever dream of. And it is a statement to

the Iraqi people that they will no longer have to live as dual victims:

victims of violence and victims of a flawed military strategy that is

at best failing to bring peace to the country and at worst perpetuating

their suffering.

The bill will refocus our troops on fighting terrorists. By doing so,

the disastrous strain being placed on our Armed Forces will be lifted

without sacrificing security objectives, and their healing can begin.

Second, it will remove a strategy from the playing field that is

certainly not working and throw open the door to new approaches which

may actually succeed. For example, the legislation requires the

President to report by January on how he is engaging U.S. allies and

regional powers in the effort to bring stability to Iraq. Far from

abandoning the Iraqis or lessening American security, we will finally

make the rehabilitation of Iraq the international priority that it must

become. The only thing we will be abandoning, in other words, Mr.

Speaker, is this administration's mistakes.

And to my friends on both sides of the aisle, yesterday I received an

advance copy of a report from the Defense Department's Inspector

General that will be made public today. It detailed the work of some of

the first companies to make armored vehicles and armored kits for our

soldiers in Iraq. They were given sole-source, unbid contracts even

though senior defense officials objected, favoring a competitive

process instead.

I hope people heard what I said. Senior officials at DOD wanted

competitive bidding for these machines, but they were overridden by the

Under Secretary of Defense.

The results were sadly predictable. The companies failed to meet

demand and sent critically important equipment late. Some of the armor

that our soldiers were sent had cracks that had simply been painted

over to try to fool them instead of fixing it. In certain instances two

left doors were sent for the same vehicle. Troops already fighting a

deadly foe had to use their precious time and energy to improvise and

come up with ways to turn useless equipment into something that could

protect them.

Our soldiers have been asked to endure terrible hardships, as well

have their families, some of which, I am ashamed to say, have been the

direct result of the practices of this administration, and they are

enduring them to this day and at this very hour. For Congress to leave

them there, to ask them to continue fighting to survive under the

mounting weight of a flawed mission--that, Mr. Speaker, is the true

definition of abandonment. And after 4 years, Democrats are tired of

this Congress abandoning our troops to a fate they have never deserved.

I would ask everyone in this Chamber how they would justify this

continued carnage to the families of our soldiers. With all we know

now, how can we still say to the children of those killed or to the

young men and women maimed for life, your loss was needed?

We cannot. What we must say to them is this: You have given enough.

It is time to come home.

The American people know what must be done and the majority of this

Congress knows what must be done. And all that remains is for those of

us here who are still opposed to this bill to decide that they too have

had enough and that they will join their countrymen in voting not with

the President but with the troops, with the people of Iraq, and with

the people of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, give me 3 seconds to say that under the

Republican administration, not a single Iraqi measure was brought up

under an open rule.

And now I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from

California (Ms. Matsui).

Mr. Speaker, let me have about 2 seconds to say that

we have allowed 4 hours of general debate. I think everybody will have

an opportunity to discuss what they think of the deadline.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from

Florida (Ms. Castor).