I thank the distinguished chair of the Rules Committee

for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise as a cosponsor of the Responsible Redeployment

from Iraq Act under this rule, and urge my colleagues to pass it today,

because in this summer of 2007, in the fifth year of the Bush-Cheney

war in Iraq, it is imperative that we chart a new direction for our

national security and be more strategic in the defense of America.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, it is clear to me

that the reckless White House policy and now the escalation of the war

is undermining our country's readiness and ability to respond to other

global

threats to our national security. Indeed, in testimony before our

committee, top commanders have testified that America runs a strategic

risk by staying on the same course in Iraq.

The generals confirm that because our personnel and equipment are

tied up in Iraq, our ability to handle future threats and contingencies

is reduced. In my State of Florida, for example, the National Guard

does not have all of the equipment it needs to train and deploy

soldiers. They are only 28 percent equipped. In effect, President

Bush's war in Iraq is impairing our country's ability to prepare for

any other threat to our national security.

Florida also feels the pinch of multiple deployments because, time

and again, our brave men and women are being asked to go back, to leave

their families, leave their jobs, return to the field of battle after

inadequate rest at home. Florida currently has the second highest

number of troops out of the 50 States deployed in Iraq, over 23,000.

And 172 Floridians have been killed and over 1,200 have been wounded

since military operations began there over 4 years ago. Hardly a week

goes by that my office is not contacted and informed of another sad but

heroic death in this cause. In fact, last week, two more Tampa Bay area

brave, heroic soldiers were killed by IEDs.

People ask me, why are our young American men and women refereeing

the ongoing Shiite-Sunni civil war? American troops cannot resolve the

Iraqi sectarian and religious conflict; only Iraqis can find the

political resolution required to stabilize Iraq. America has now spent

over $450 billion in Iraq. When will the Iraqi government take

responsibility for the future of their country?

President Bush's war in Iraq has been very costly. Over $10 billion a

month now, costly not just in terms of degradation of our Nation's

readiness, the waste and fraud due to the lack of oversight, but

President Bush is sacrificing the health care of our children and our

seniors and investments in our towns and neighborhoods while continuing

this war without end.

So after 4 years of war and over 3,500 American lives, and the Bush-

Cheney failure to aggressively pursue a political solution, we demand a

new direction and a comprehensive strategy for our great Nation.