Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask my colleagues to resist the

urge to begin a withdrawal of our forces from Iraq within 90 days as

this bill requires. Doing so would have a devastating impact on our

ability to fight terrorism here and abroad and would have severe

security impacts, not only in Iraq but throughout the Middle East and

the entire region. My motion to recommit will ensure that when we

withdraw from Iraq, we do so based on the conditions on the ground by

requiring we take into account our national security assessments and

the regional security implications, as outlined by the National

Intelligence Estimate for Iraq.

We are not in the position to determine when U.S. forces should

redeploy from Iraq. Only the commanders on the ground have that

information. Only our commanders and diplomatic representatives on the

ground can determine effectively when conditions are in place to

warrant a troop withdrawal. It would be irresponsible for us to assign

such an arbitrary timeline and impose it upon our leadership in

theater.

We have to consider the conditions that we would leave the Iraqi

Government to deal with going forward if we were to precipitously

withdraw our personnel.

In my view, there are two significant threats that would remain

behind, and the Iraqi Government would not be prepared to effectively

counter either one. The al Qaeda threat in Iraq is significant. Al

Qaeda's deputy commented a few days ago that the establishment of an

Islamic state of Iraq is an important milestone on the way to reviving

the Islamic caliphate. He noted that the defeat of American forces in

Iraq is a key to this objective.

Securing control over Iraq is the strategic objective for al Qaeda

that

will enable it to conduct operations against their targets in the

Middle East, particularly against Israel, in addition to Europe and

other U.S. global interests. Al Qaeda is particularly interested in the

Persian Gulf oil fields, and Iraq would serve as a valuable staging

area for such attacks.

Right now the Iraqi forces, security forces working in partnership

with U.S. forces, are building momentum to erode al Qaeda's influence

over Sunni insurgent groups in Iraq. A premature withdrawal would

derail those efforts.

Al Qaeda in Iraq has been conducting indiscriminate attacks on Iraqi

civilians. Sunni Arabs reject this tactic, and there is a growing

backlash among the population. Sunni communities have encouraged

thousands to join the local police forces and improve security. This is

real progress.

A few days ago, al Qaeda's deputy warned Iraqi citizens that have

supported the U.S. to consider what will happen to them after the

Americans leave. If we abandon them now, we will be hard-pressed to

gain their trust any time again in the future.

Iran also has an interest in seeing us fail and leave Iraq early. We

know that Iran has been arming militia groups within Iraq. We know that

Iran has infiltrated various levels of Iraqi government and its

security forces.

If we redeployed from Iraq before the Maliki government has the

capability to contain this threat, we would leave Iraq vulnerable to

becoming an Iranian surrogate.

The porous Iraqi-Syrian border would provide Iran with contiguous,

unfettered access to the coast of Lebanon. Through its support of Hamas

and Hezbollah, Iran would then become even more a danger to the

prospect of security and stability in the Middle East.

It would be irresponsible for us to even consider withdrawing from

Iraq before the Maliki government has the capacity to deter these two

threats. We must be conscious of the dangerous message we are sending

with an early withdrawal.

First, we would lose the trust and will of the Iraqi people and the

democratically elected government we worked so hard to create. The

extremists associated with al Qaeda will hear a message that will tell

them that Americans acknowledged defeat, and do not have the stomach

for this war or any other war with al Qaeda. Our defeat would only

inspire like-minded jihadists to take up their cause.

One need only look as far as yesterday to see the headlines of what

could happen here in this country. A couple of days ago, we were

reminded how close to home the terror threat is. The Fort Dix, New

Jersey, individuals are just one example.

I ask everyone on both sides of the aisle to support this motion to

recommit.