Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank Congresswoman Stephanie

Tubbs Jones for the leadership that she's providing this evening,

having taken out the time on the floor to have the members of the

Congressional Black Caucus engage this body on this issue of the war in

Iraq. I thank you for your leadership, and I'm proud to work with you

to help bring our Congress to the conclusion that we must get out of

Iraq.

Last week, President Bush and his White House propaganda machine made

another attempt at misleading the Nation. Yet again, unsubstantiated

anecdotal claims of progress were used to support a continued

occupation of Iraq.

However, the President's claims of progress ran contrary to multiple

independent reports recently published, including, from the Government

Accountability Office, General Jones, and the National Intelligence

Estimate. These reports painted a bleak picture of Iraq: continued high

levels of violence, a dysfunctional Iraqi government, and sectarian

influence that continue to plague the Iraqi security forces.

President Bush's vision of an enduring relationship with Iraq amounts

to an endless and unlimited military occupation. Instead of a

significant change of policy, the President has reaffirmed his

commitment to a dangerous continuation of a failed policy in Iraq.

Deepening sectarian divisions in Iraq make the American military

presence increasingly obsolete. In fact, our presence may actually be

making the situation worse as Iraqi political leaders hide behind our

troops and refuse to make the necessary compromises.

Meanwhile, we continue to train and equip Iraqi security forces and

so-called volunteer Sunni sectarian militias across Iraq. Experts

suggest that we're merely training different sides of a violent civil

war, and losing track of over 190,000 weapons meant for the security

forces is surely only adding fuel to the fires raging in Iraq. That is

why my colleagues and I recently introduced H.R. 3134, the Responsible

Security in Iraq Act. This legislation will halt the dangerous practice

of training and equipping of Iraqi security forces, at least until the

Iraqi Government matures.

At the cost of precious American lives, the President seeks only to

disguise the fact that he has no exit strategy for Iraq. It becomes

increasingly clear that George Bush seeks only to protect his own

legacy and saddle the next President with the mess he's created in the

Middle East.

Let us not forget that, in addition to almost 3,800 troops who have

died, 800 of those troops who have died in Iraq have died since the

surge was announced in January, including 16 troops since General

Petraeus came to Congress to testify just last week.

I know that the media, many in the media have blamed the wonderful,

wonderful support group of the Democratic Caucus and people who want to

get us out of Iraq for attacking General Petraeus. But I join with

them, not in an attack on General Petraeus, but in telling the truth

about what has been happening.

Moveon.org need not be ashamed of its advocacy. They need not be a

shame of its ads. They are telling the truth, and we need to speak

truth to power on this issue.

President Bush sought to appease those who oppose the war by

announcing that 5,700 troops will be coming home this year, and another

few brigades will possibly return by summer of next year. But these

reductions were scheduled to occur with or without Bush's consent.

Deployment limits are being reached, and the military has no trained

and ready troops to replace the ones leaving.

As the New York Times stated, it's like George Bush dropping an

object and then taking credit for gravity.

Regardless, these planned reductions would merely lower our troop

levels to 130,000 by summer of 2008. It is absolutely unacceptable that

our military presence in Iraq by next summer will still be the same as

pre-surge levels.

I'm delighted for the families of the troops who will be leaving

Iraq. Many of these troops will be returning from a second, third or

even fourth deployment. However, without a significant change in

strategy, the President is

signaling that these troops should not get too comfortable at home.

President Bush will surely have them deployed back to Iraq as soon as

possible.

As Chair of the Out of Iraq Caucus, I, along with my colleagues, have

been advocating for a different direction for years now. In stark

contrast to the direction of the President, we understand that the only

acceptable option for Iraq is a fully funded withdrawal of all of our

troops and military contracts.

The other day, my friend, Congressman John Murtha said, and I quote,

``Yes, many Iraqis consider us the occupiers. But it is also true that

Iraq is really occupying us.'' We couldn't be more right. He couldn't

be more right.

Let's bring our troops home to their families as soon as possible and

refocus this country's resources on the issues that matter the most to

the American people. It is time to end this war in Iraq.

And to those who are getting a little bit disgusted with the fact

that we don't seem to be making as much progress as we should here in

the Congress of the United States, I would like to encourage them not

to give up.

I know that it appears that Petraeus and the President organized a

presentation and tried to win over the hearts of Americans by putting a

general out there, just as he put Colin Powell out when Colin Powell

went up to the U.N. and pointed to the buildings where weapons of mass

destruction were being manufactured. Colin Powell has said since that

time, it was perhaps the worst thing that he could have done in his

career. And of course, people respect generals, and they respect

Petraeus because he has a long history of having made sacrifice and

having been a good warrior.

But ladies and gentlemen, he's wrong on this one. We don't have to

back up. We don't have to shy away from this fight. We don't have to

give in and think somehow we're going to be thought of as unpatriotic.

Patriotism is to stand up for what is right, what is right for the

security of this Nation.

We're at greater risk now than we were before we went in to invade

Iraq. As a matter of fact, this President and this war has unsettled

the entire Middle East. We know that since we've been there, not only

have we created a civil war and all of the sectarian violence, we also

know that we have pulled in to this war Iran, and we also know that we

are on the verge of pulling in Syria to this war. We also know that

this entire Middle East is unsettled because of our occupation.

Despite the fact that the President of the United States said we

would be welcomed with open arms, they want us out of Iraq. They want

to end the occupation.

Yes, we have some responsibilities there. Yes, we should help to

rebuild Iraq, but first, we must bring our soldiers home. We must stop

the carnage. We must stop the killings. We must bring our soldiers

home.

And I join with Barbara Lee and Lynn Woolsey and members of the

Congressional Black Caucus who support the idea that we will vote for

funding to bring the troops home safely and securely. We will not vote

for funding to continue this war.

We know that the President of the United States has made another

request in a supplemental. I will not be voting for any funding to

continue the war. And for those of us who really, really believe in

what we're saying, for those of us who are committed to the proposition

that we can end this war, we will not give him another dime to continue

the war.