

had we not had a precipitous withdrawal like the one provided for in this bill?

Second, in the 1980s, the Afghan resistance built momentum by recruiting Muslim fighters to wage jihad against the Soviets. The Soviet withdrawal of 1989 was followed by a civil war and the collapse of the government. The Taliban rose in 1993 and gained control of Afghanistan.

In 1996, bin-Laden moved to Afghanistan where he forged an alliance between al-Qaeda and the Taliban. What followed were al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center, Khobar Towers, the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the USS *Cole*, and then September 11th. My colleagues, ask yourself this: "Could the U.S. have prevented the rise of al-Qaeda by responding to these threats?"

I want to urge my colleagues to keep in mind that the world is watching how the United States handles this tough challenge in Iraq. If we concede defeat and retreat, we will send a strong message of weakness and inability to remain committed to our allies and to our enemies.

Tom Friedman noted in the New York Times this week that our withdrawal will mean "more ethnic, religious and tribal killings across Iraq," adding, "it will be one of the most morally ugly scenes you can imagine, no less than Darfur." The Post today also stated that a withdrawal will result in a "full-blown civil war, conflicts spreading beyond Iraq's borders, or genocide." Picture the Iraqis who have helped us, picture them watch as we prepare to leave and picture them clinging to our vehicles in fear of their very lives as we start down the road from Baghdad.

I believe this reckless abandonment of the mission in Iraq would send a clear message to the Iraqi people, our allies, and potential partners around the world that Americans are weak and cannot be trusted. In this world of transnational terrorism and proliferation we can not afford to stand alone.

It is critical that we give General Petraeus the months we gave him to implement his strategy, and I urge my colleagues to vote against this dangerous bill. In this case national security should trump national politics.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair reminds all Members to direct their remarks to the Chair, and not to others in the second person.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to an energetic new Member, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HARE).

Mr. HARE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

On January 10, President Bush announced an increase of more than 20,000 troops in Iraq. Six months later, it is clear that the President's surge strategy has yielded no positive results, and Iraq continues to remain a battleground for sectarian violence and a hotbed for terrorist activity.

But in spite of the realities on the ground, the President seems intent on further digging in his heels on a failed policy that has placed targets on the backs of our troops as they attempt to referee a civil war. In the 6 months

that I have served in Congress, the 17th Congressional District of Illinois has mourned the lives of six brave soldiers. In the absence of any visible progress, we can no longer stand by as more of our troops come home in body bags.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush started this war without a plan to win the peace. For the sake of our troops, our national security and our credibility around the world, this Congress must do what this President refuses to do in order to return stability to Iraq. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY).

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, as I read this resolution, I can't help but think "there they go again."

With approval ratings of Congress near record lows, the majority leadership searches the polls for any issue they can use to political advantage. Unfortunately, their attempt to improve their standing comes at the expense of troops on the ground and our country's security.

Of course the American people are concerned about the course of events in Iraq. Of course they mourn each loss. Of course they want our troops to come home as soon as possible. Of course they do, because we all do.

But responsible leadership does not permit pandering to polls and understandable emotions without facing up to the real consequences of the vote. And by the way, putting the word "responsible" in the title of a bill does not make it so. It is an understandable, though I believe misguided, position to require an immediate withdrawal of forces from Iraq. This resolution, though, is an attempt to play politics with the issue and avoid responsibility for the consequences that come from its aftermath.

Requiring withdrawal on a congressionally mandated timetable abandons those who have worked with us, invites chaos and more death in Iraq and increases the risk to our security here at home. No one should be able to stick his or her head in the sand and ignore those consequences.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that what goes on in this Chamber with resolutions like this is encouraging to our adversaries and makes the job of our troops on the ground even harder than it needs to be. How can it possibly be responsible to declare failure when all of our troops have only been in Iraq for just about exactly 1 month today. This struggle and the broader war against radical Islamist terrorists will require the best of us, and that requires doing our constitutional duty. This resolution is far from the best we can do.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to a very thoughtful colleague, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE), 2 minutes.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2956, which would compel a responsible exit of U.S. troops from Iraq.

I voted against giving the President the authority to go to war in Iraq. Two years ago, BRAD MILLER and I introduced legislation to terminate the authorization and to require of the President a comprehensive exit strategy. The President has responded to calls for change by stubbornly adhering to a failed strategy that has cost our Nation dearly in blood, treasure and moral authority. He has rejected Congress's constitutional role in determining policy, and he has ignored the will of the American people. This obstinate, irresponsible, destructive course must not continue.

Now, the President has put great stock in the recent surge in U.S. forces, but the surge seems mainly to have shifted the locus of the fighting. The intent was to create space for Iraq's political leaders to make the hard choices that will lead their country forward, but those hard choices are not being made. We can no longer leave our foreign policy at the mercy of sectarian and political forces we cannot control.

A mission of simply biding time, at great cost in blood and treasure, is not one that we can or should support. We must begin to bring our troops home.

Yet, as I and many others have repeatedly argued, it not only matters that we leave Iraq, but it also matters greatly how we leave. We cannot afford the same mistakes that the Bush administration made in entering Iraq, without a plan for protecting troops, for managing consequences or for giving the Iraqi people every possible chance to succeed.

Therefore, the bill before us would provide the discipline of a timeline to the Bush administration for beginning and completing the termination of combat operations and the redeployment of our troops. It would also compel the development of a comprehensive strategy for managing the redeployment and addressing the challenges that Iraq will continue to present after our troops are gone.

Mr. Speaker, the continued presence of 160,000 American troops in Iraq is not sustainable and does not serve our national interest. It is time not merely to urge but to require a change of course. This legislation does just that, and I urge its passage.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCHWARTZ).

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Mr. Speaker, today President Bush, as required by Congress, has reported on progress made by the Iraqi Government on political and military benchmarks. He reported that the Iraqis have not accomplished any of these goals.

It is time, in fact past time, for the Iraqis to take control of their own future. It is time for the Iraqis to move forward, resolve their internal conflicts and begin the process of national reconciliation.

More than 3,600 Americans have paid the ultimate sacrifice to bring freedom