Honorable Ron Paul of Texas Statement on HR 2956, the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act

12 July 2007

Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to HR 2956 which, while a well-intended attempt to reduce our nation's seemingly unlimited military commitment in Iraq , is in so many respects deeply flawed.

I have been one of the strongest opponents of military action against Iraq . I voted against the initial authorization in 2002 and I have voted against every supplemental appropriations bill to fund the war. I even voted against the initial " Iraq regime change" legislation back in 1998. I believe our troops should be brought back to the United States without delay. Unfortunately, one of the reasons I oppose this legislation is that it masquerades as a troop withdrawal measure but in reality may well end up increasing US commitments in the Middle East .

Mr. Speaker, this is precisely the debate we should have had four years ago, before Congress voted to abrogate its Constitutional obligation to declare war and transfer that authority to the president. Some in this body were rather glib in declaring the constitution antiquated while voting to cede the ability to initiate hostilities to the President. Now we see the result of ignoring the Constitution, and we are bringing even more mayhem to the process with this legislation.

To those who believe this act would some how end the war, I simply point to the title for Section 3 of the bill, which states, "REQUIREMENT TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF ARMED FORCES IN IRAQ AND TRANSITION TO A LIMITED PRESENCE OF THE ARMED FORCES IN IRAQ." However the number of troops are limited, this legislation nevertheless will permit an ongoing American military presence in Iraq with our soldiers continuing to be engaged in hostilities.

I also wish to draw attention to Section 4(b)(1), which mandates the President to submit a "Strategy for Iraq " by the beginning of next year. This "strategy" is to include:

"A discussion of United States national security interests in Iraq and the broader Middle East region and the diplomatic, political, economic, and military components of a comprehensive strategy to maintain and advance such interests as the Armed Forces are redeployed from Iraq pursuant to section 3 of this Act."

In other words, far from extricating ourselves from the debacle in Iraq , this bill would set in motion a policy that could lead to a wider regional commitment, both financially and militarily. Such a policy would be disastrous for both our overextended national security forces and beleaguered taxpayers. This could, in fact, amount to an authorization for a region-wide "surge."

Congress' job is to change the policy on Iraq , not to tell the military leaders how many troops they should have. I have attempted to do this with HR 2605, a bill to sunset after a six month period the authorization for military activity in Iraq . During this period a new plan for Iraq could be discussed and agreed. Plan first, authorization next, execution afterward. That is what we should be doing in Iraq .

In summary, Mr. Speaker, this legislation brings us no closer to ending the war in Iraq . It brings us no closer to bringing our troops home. It says nothing about withdrawal, only about redeployment. It says nothing about reducing US presence in the Middle East, and may actually lead to an expanded US presence in the region. We have no guarantee the new strategy demanded by this legislation would not actually expand our military activities to Iran and Syria and beyond. I urge my colleagues to reject this legislation and put forth an effective strategy to end the war in Iraq and to bring our troops home.