The debate in the House

today concerning the extent of U.S. involvement

in the military action in

Libya, now led by NATO, is a necessary

and important debate, and I appreciate

the role that DENNIS KUCINICH has

played in this.

Both resolutions being considered

today recognize the essential role of

Congress in authorizing and in funding

the use of U.S. Armed Forces consistent

with the War Powers act and

the Constitution. Both resolutions require

the Members of the House to reflect

on the appropriateness of the use

of military force in this operation, as

outlined by the President. And both

resolutions initiate the entirely appropriate

debate over the objectives of

this operation as well as its duration.

In my judgment, the President’s initial

commitment of U.S. airpower and

naval forces to support the international

effort was appropriate and

certainly within his power as Commander

in Chief. The U.S. effort was

undertaken in concert with a broad coalition

of nations, some of our closest

friends, and it followed a resolution

adopted in the United Nations Security

Council authorizing all necessary

measures to protect Libyan civilians

attempting to overthrow the oppressive

regime of Muammar al Qadhafi.

The Qadhafi government’s response to

the uprising—inspired by the Arab

Spring movement—was to use force

against civilians and opposition forces,

and the brutal measures prompted the

international outcry and the U.N. action.

At the time, the President stated

clearly that our leadership of the

NATO effort would last a matter of

days, not weeks. While the direct U.S.

leadership of this effort lasted a brief

time, U.S. forces remain engaged in the

NATO operation; and at this point, it is

clear that Members of Congress are not

comfortable with the extent of information

they have been given about the

direction, the duration, or the cost of

the operation. Under the War Powers

act, the President has an obligation to

report to Congress and to seek concurrence

if our military involvement extends

longer than 60 days, and clearly

such consultation has not been effectively

accomplished.

We are encouraged by statements

from the Obama administration that

U.S. ground forces will not be used in

Libya. And last week, 416 Members of

Congress supported the Conyers

amendment to the Defense authorization

bill that would prohibit funds in

the bill from being used to deploy

ground forces in the country.

At issue now is whether Congress

should act through the Kucinich resolution

to effectively terminate the U.S.

involvement in the NATO effort within

2 weeks or whether Congress, through

the Boehner resolution, should scold

the President for not providing greater

detail about specific actions, contributions

of other nations to the effort, and

the possible involvement of Hezbollah,

the Muslim Brotherhood, al Qaeda, and

other organizations in and outside the

region in providing support to the Libyan

Government.

I believe the Kucinich resolution is

premature and that it could materially

harm our relationship with NATO allies

from which we will undoubtedly require

support in the future.

I believe the Boehner resolution

is an attack on the President,

something most of the Republican Caucus

would vote against if its party was

in control of the executive branch.

I do support a wider debate and

greater oversight of the use and the

cost of U.S. military forces engaged in

the Libya operation, both in the Defense

and Foreign Affairs-related committees

here as well as in the full

House. I am neither prepared to end

our involvement unilaterally, as in the

Kucinich amendment, nor do I believe

Congress should officially declare our

involvement in this effort that has not

been properly explained by the President.

I think the President made a very

strong statement to the American people

about why we were going to use

this for humanitarian reasons. I think

the Qadhafi regime is a brutal regime

that should be replaced, and I hope

that we can accomplish that.