Mr. Speaker, President Bush continues to strongly

suggest that America will go to war

against Iraq without the support of the

United Nations or a significant number

of our traditional European allies. Following his lead,

many Americans, as well as media commentators,

have become critical of the United Nations and

the member nations of the Security

Council that have expressed opposition

to U.S. military action at this time.

My concern, Mr. Speaker, is that the United States is needlessly losing the

world opinion war with dangerous implications for the real war against Iraq

or, even worse, for the larger war

against terrorism.

I voted against the congressional resolution that authorized unilateral U.S.

military action against Iraq in part because of my fear that President Bush

would have less incentive to create the

type of world coalition that was so successful in the Gulf War. We tend to for-

get that the Gulf War was successful in

many ways beyond the mere fact that

the U.S. liberated Kuwait. The coalition of support meant that many

countries provided manpower, money, and

the political support that made U.S.

actions justified in world opinions,

even in Muslim countries.

The situation, Mr. Speaker, we now

face with Iraq is very different. The logistics to carry out the war may suffer

from the inability to utilize bases or

air flight over countries that were previously supportive in the Gulf War.

The cost of the war will be borne almost entirely by the United States.

President Bush has not included the

costs, estimated from 50- to $200 billion

in his budget. And this does not even include the cost to rebuild Iraq. It also

does not include assistance that other

countries are demanding. For example, Turkey, which has asked for an aid

package in the tens of billions.

My greater concern, Mr. Speaker, is

whether the lack of support by other

countries stiffens the resolve of the

Iraqis to fight and makes it more difficult for U.S. forces to conduct the

war or alternatively encourage the fundamentalist forces that perceive American action as anti-Muslim and, there-

fore, accelerate terrorist attacks

against the United States.

I keep asking why the Bush administration feels it is necessary to adopt

the rhetoric of unilateral action given

the perils that might accompany it.

Why do the President and his advisors

insist that they do not need the United Nations and our traditional allies even

while they pursue resolutions in the

Security Council and try to convince

other countries to support us.

It often seems that their rhetoric

makes it all the more difficult to

achieve the world coalition that was so successful in the Gulf War.

Mr. Speaker, it is crucial that in the

next few days and the next few weeks,

the Bush administration make every

effort to achieve the support of the United Nations as well as the key

countries such as France, Germany, Russia and China that have voiced U.S.

opposition to U.S. policy in Iraq. The

President can best accomplish this goal

if he makes it clear that a world coalition is crucial to the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that we can avoid a war altogether by working

within the Security Council to successfully disarm Iraq. I still hope that that

can be accomplished. But absent that,

the President must work a lot harder

to build a world coalition to support a

war if it is going to take place and

avoid the political perils of unilateral military action.