Mr. Speaker, I stand in opposition to this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, the most important and difficult

decision a Member of Congress must make is

the decision to send our troops—our sons,

daughters, husbands and wives—in harm’s way.

Each member must do as I have done—listen to the arguments on both sides of the

issue, assemble and review all available information and then do what they believe is in the

best interest of our nation. Some people have questioned the President’s motives and the timing of this resolution. A few members of this body traveled to

Baghdad to meet with officials of the government of Iraq.

Frankly, I was appalled to see a Member of

the Congress from my party in Baghdad questioning the motives of President Bush. I do not

question the President’s motives. I believe the

President is doing what he believes is in the

best interest of our nation.

After much though and deliberation, I have

decided to vote against the resolution before

us giving the President the discretion to send

our troops to war in Iraq. I do so for the following reasons:

First, I believe we have a moral obligation

and a responsibility to exhaust every possible

resolution before sending our troops into

harm’s way. I do not believe that we have attempted to assemble an international coalition

similar to the coalition that President George

Herbert Walker Bush brought together to undertake the mission of Desert Shield and

Desert Storm in 1990–1991. Second, Iraq does not present a direct immediate threat to the United States. I have attended numerous briefings from the Bush administration on this topic, and I have yet to

hear a good explanation as to why Saddam

Hussein is a greater threat to us today than he

was six months or a year ago. In fact, our intelligence agencies have concluded that Saddam Hussein is unlikely to attack the United

States unprovoked, but there is a real change

that Saddam Hussein will use weapons of

mass destruction in response to an invasion.

Last and more importantly, the President’s

decision to change our military doctrine from

containment to preemptive action could have

major ramifications to the United States and

may lead to war between other countries.

For the past 50 years, the United States has

used our military troops to contain aggression

against the U.S. and our allies. We have been

able to persuade our allies to use restraint instead of their military under the most difficult

circumstances and times. During the Persian

Gulf war, the U.S. was able to persuade Israel

to show great restraint while Saddam Hussein

was deploying scud missiles toward Israel.

Since the Persian Gulf war, the Israelis at the

request of the United States have shown restraint in dealing with Arafat and the PLO.

If the U.S military attacks a country in order

to counter a perceived future security risk,

other countries may very well adopt the same

preemptive policy. Those countries are more

likely to follow the U.S. and less likely to show

restraint, with serious potential consequences

for Israel and the Palestinians, India and Pakistan, Russia and Chechnya, China and Taiwan, and the list goes on.

Secretary Colin Powell recently reminded us

that other countries look to the United States

for our leadership and example. I agree! I only

hope that when looking to the United States

that they do not adopt the new preemptive

military policy and use that same policy against their enemies.

Mr. Speaker, this administration should follow the example of the President’s father prior

to Desert Shield and during Desert Storm. We

should be putting together an international coalition to send in weapon inspectors and if

necessary take military action to disarm Saddam Hussein. A ‘‘go it alone’’ attitude or policy

could have devastating consequences on our

troops, the people of Israel and other parts of

the world. Mr. Speaker, therefore, I will vote against

this resolution and in favor of the Spratt substitute.