Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support

of House Joint Resolution 114 to provide authorization for the use of military force against Iraq. While I hope

and pray President Bush does not have

to commit our troops to such action, I

believe that he must have the authority he needs to protect U.S. national

security interests.

The events of September 11 showed

that we are not protected from an attack on our homeland. There can be no

doubt that Saddam Hussein possesses

and continues to cultivate weapons of

mass destruction. The U.N. weapons inspectors were thrown out of Iraq 4

years ago for a reason. A first strike

made with weapons of mass destruction

can result in millions dead, and the

U.S. must be prepared to act preemptively.

Some ask why we must act against

this threat in particular. The answer is

that this threat is unique. I need not

remind anyone that Hussein has used

weapons of mass destruction already

against his own people. In addition, he

has tried to dominate the Middle East

and has struck other nations in the region, including our ally, Israel, without warning.

Keeping this in mind, it seems to me

that we, as guardians of freedom, have

an awesome responsibility to act to ensure that Saddam Hussein cannot carry

out a first strike against the United

States or our allies.

Mr. Speaker, while there is no doubt

that unqualified support for military

intervention from the U.N. is preferable, we must be prepared to defend

ourselves alone. We must never allow

the foreign policy of our country to be

dictated by those entities that may or

may not have U.S. interests at heart.

The resolution before us does not

mandate military intervention in Iraq.

It does, however, give President Bush

clear authority to invade Iraq should

he determine that Hussein is not complying with the conditions we have laid

before him. Chief among these is full

and unfettered weapons inspections. If

he fails to comply, we will have no

choice but to take action. Our security demands it.

Mr. Speaker, the world community

watching this debate ought not conclude that respectful disagreements on

the floor of this House divide us. On

the contrary, we find strength through

an open airing of all views. We never

take this privilege for granted, and we

need look no further than to Iraq to understand why.

At the end of this debate, Congress

will speak with one voice. I find comfort in the knowledge that this unity

represents a promise that we will never

back down from preserving our freedoms and protecting our homeland

from those who wish to destroy us.