Mr. Speaker, ‘‘When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for the people to dissolve the political bonds which have

connected them with another, a decent

respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the

causes which impel them.’’

When the delegates to the Second

Continental Congress began to debate

those immortal words in July of 1776,

they did not have the long lens of history to guide them. These bold men

adopted the radical idea of independence based upon deeply-held convictions and beliefs that bloodshed,

though unwanted, was a probable

course. Indeed, when the document declaring independence was executed in

August of that year, 30,000 British and

Hessian troops were assembled at Staten Island, New York, a 3 days’ journey from Philadelphia.

At first blush, those of you reminded

of this narrative would quickly make

the distinction that those Philadelphia

delegates and the colonists they represented were in imminent peril, and

we are not. Is that in fact the case

after September 11? America’s enemies

today do not dispatch columns of infantrymen ‘‘across the green’’ or battleships upon the high seas. Instead, we

face a deadlier threat in chemical and

biological weapons willing to be dispersed by an army of anonymous killers. This 107th Congress,

as our forefathers before, must face this difficult

issue without the benefit of history’s clarity.

I have been contacted by a number of

Missourians with wide-ranging opinions, and some have proclaimed, ‘‘Let

us not wage war with Iraq.’’ Would that

I could will it so, possessing the knowledge as I do of the threat Iraq poses.

Would that Saddam Hussein lay down

his arms, those weapons designed to

commit mass murder against the defenseless.

Now, time does not permit me to

make my case, but there has been a lot

of discussion about the case that has

been made, and I am convinced that

Iraq continues to possess and manufacture weapons of mass destruction in defiance of 12 years of Security Council resolutions.

My colleague, the gentlewoman from

California (Ms. LOFGREN), a good

friend, a moment ago said there is no

definitive link between Iraq and the attacks of September 11, 2001; and I acknowledge that. However, our United

States intelligence services have detected that Saddam’s regime has begun

efforts to reach out to terrorist groups

with global reach.

I acknowledge that Saddam Hussein’s

regime is largely secular and has often

clashed with fanatical religious fundamentalist groups. However, I am

mindful of a disquieting adage, the

enemy of my enemy is my friend.

The resolution I support today suggests a variety of means to disarm Iraq

without immediately resorting to the

end of open warfare. It is imperative

that the United Nations take strong

action to implement a comprehensive

and unfettered regime of weapons inspections. It is deeply troubling to me,

however, that the only thing that

seems to compel Saddam Hussein into

compliance is the threat of military

force. Certainly many questions remain. However, the risks of inaction

are greater, in my mind, than the risks of action.

Ironically, a number of family members who lost loved ones last September have come to Capitol Hill and

have questioned the inability of our intelligence agencies to foresee those attacks prior to September 11. Why did

we not act upon those threads of information, they ask plaintively? Why did

we not prevent the horrific attacks of

that crisp, clear morning? Mr. Speaker, let us not allow that

tragic history to be repeated. We have a moral responsibility to defend our Nation from harm. This conflict has

been brought to us, and we have provoked it only by being free. We must move forward decisively, confident in

the knowledge that our voices, which cry out so desperately for a lasting peace, have been and will be heard by the rest of the world.