Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished

member of the Committee on Inter-

national Relations for his kindness in

yielding me time.

As many of us who have come to this

floor, I come with a heavy heart but a

respect for my colleagues and the

words that they have offered today.

As I stand here, I sometimes feel the

world is on our shoulders, but I also

think that my vote is a vote for life or

death—I have chosen life and so I take

the path of opposition to this resolution in order to avoid the tragic path

that led former Secretary of Defense

Robert MacNamara to admit, in his

painful mea culpa regarding the Vietnam War, we were wrong, terribly wrong.

He saw the lost lives of our young

men and women, some 58,000 who came

home in body bags; and after years of

guilt stemming from his role in prosecuting the war in Vietnam,

MacNamara was moved to expose his

soul on paper with his book, ‘‘In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of

Vietnam.’’ He noted the words of an

ancient Greek philosopher that ‘‘the

reward of suffering is experience,’’ and

concluded solemnly, let this be the

lasting legacy of Vietnam; that we

never send our young men and women

into war without thoughtful, provocative analysis and an offer of diplomacy.

I stand in opposition for another reason, and that is because I hold the Constitution very dear. I might suggest to

my colleagues that when our Founding

Fathers decided to write the Constitution over 4 months of the hot summer

of 1787, they talked about the distribution of authority between legislative,

executive and judicial branches, and

they said it was a bold attempt to create an energetic central government at

the same time that the sovereignty of

the people would be preserved.

Frankly, the people of the United

States should make the determination

through this House of a declaration of

war. And as the Constitution was written, it said, ‘‘We the people of the

United States, in order to form a more

perfect union, establish justice, provide

for the common defense, establish the

Constitution of the United States of

America.’’ For that reason, I believe

that this Nation, that suffered a war in

Vietnam, should understand the importance of having the Congress of the

United States declare war.

The reason I say that is we continue

to suffer today as countless veterans of

that generation from Vietnam have

never recovered from the physical and

mental horrors of their experiences,

many reliving the nightmares, plagued

by demons as they sleep homeless on

our streets at night. What a price we

continue to pay for that mistake. Can

we afford to make it again?

Mr. Speaker, I am opposed to this

resolution because it so clearly steers

us towards a treacherous path of war

while yielding sparse efforts to guide

us to the more navigable road to peace.

As Benjamin Franklin said in 1883,

‘‘There never was a good war or a bad

peace.’’ Mr. Speaker, we have yet to

give the power of diplomacy a chance

and the power of the moral rightness of

the high ground the chance that civilization deserves. Do we not deserve as

well as the right to die the right to

live? We have had the experience of

Vietnam to see the alternatives. So if

the unacceptable costs of war come

upon us, why not use diplomacy? It is

time to use diplomacy now.

The resolution before us is unlikely

to lead to peace now or in the future

because of the dangerous precedent

that it would set. The notion of taking

a first strike against another sovereign

nation risks upsetting the already tenuous balance of powers around the

world. In a time when countless nations are armed with enough weaponry

to destroy their neighbors with the

mere touch of a button, it can hardly

be said that our example of attacking

another country in the absence of self-defense is an acceptable way to go. The

justification would sow the seeds of

peace if we decided to follow peace.

It is important to note that rather

than the President’s proposed doctrine

of first strike, we would do well to look

to diplomacy first. The first strike presumption of the President would represent an unprecedented departure

from a long-held United States policy

of being a nonaggressor. We would say

to the world that it is acceptable to do

a first strike in fear instead of pursuing all possible avenues to a diplomatic solution.

Imagine the world in chaos with

India going after Pakistan, China opting to fight Taiwan instead of negotiating, and North Korea going after

South Korea and erupting into an all-out war. Because actions always speak

louder than words, the United States’

wise previous admonitions to show restraint to the world would go to the

winds, and then, of course, would fall on deaf ears.

There is another equally important

reason I must oppose this resolution. It

is because to vote for it would be to effectively abdicate our constitutional

responsibility as a Member of Congress

to declare war when conditions call for

such action. The resolution before us

declares war singly by the President by

allowing a first strike without the

knowledge of imminent danger and

without the input of Congress. It is by

article 1, section 8 of the Constitution

of the United States that calls for us to declare war.

Saddam Hussein is evil. He is a despot. We know that. And I support the

undermining of his government by giving resistance to the United States, to

be able to address these by humanitarian aid, by military support in

terms of training, and also by pro-

viding support to the resistance. Yet I

think we can do other things. Diplomacy first, unfettered robust United

States weapons inspections, monitored

review by United Nations Security

Council, Soviet Union model of ally-supported isolation, support of democratization, and developing a more

stringent United States containment policy.

This resolution is wrong. We must

not abdicate our responsibility. And

most importantly, Mr. Speaker, as I go

to my seat, I stand here on the side of

saving the lives of the young men and

women of this Nation.

As I stand on the House floor today with

great respect for the heartfelt positions of my

colleagues, I must take the path of opposition

to this resolution in order to avoid following the

tragic path that led former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to admit in his painful

mea culpa regarding the Vietnam war, ‘‘We

were wrong, terribly wrong.’’ After years of

guilt stemming from his role in prosecuting the

war in Vietnam, McNamara was moved to expose his soul on paper with his book:

‘‘In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam’’. He noted the words of the ancient

Greek dramatist Aeschylus who said ‘‘The reward of suffering is experience,’’ and

concluded solemnly, ‘‘Let this be the lasting legacy of Vietnam.’’ Therefore this legacy should

remind us that war is deadly and the Congress must not abdicate its responsibility.

This Nation did suffer as result of that war,

and we continue to suffer today as countless

veterans of that generation have never recovered from the physical and mental horrors of

their experiences, many reliving the nightmares, plagued by demons as they sleep

homeless on our streets at night. What a price

we continue to pay for that mistake. Can we

afford to make it again? I think not.

Mr. Speaker, I am opposed to this resolution

because it so clearly steers us toward a

treacherous path of war, while yielding sparse

efforts to guide us to the more navigable road

to peace. And as Benjamin Franklin said in

1883, ‘‘there never was a good war or a bad

peace’’—but we have yet to give the power of

diplomacy and the power of the moral high

ground the chance that civilization itself deserves. We have had the experience of Vietnam to see the alternatives, so if there were

ever a time for diplomacy, it has got to be now.

The resolution before us is unlikely to lead

to peace now or in the future because of the

dangerous precedent that it would set. The

notion of taking a first strike against another

sovereign nation risks upsetting the already

tenuous balance of powers around the world.

In a time when countless nations are armed

with enough weaponry to destroy their neighbors with the mere touch of a button, it can

hardly be said that our example of attacking

another country in the absence of a self defense justification would sow the seeds of

peace around the world. Rather, the President’s proposed doctrine of first strike, which

would represent an unprecedented departure

from a long-held United States’ policy of being

a non-aggressor, would say to the world that

it is acceptable to do a first strike in fear, instead of pursuing all possible avenues to a

diplomatic solution. Imagine the chaos in the

world if India and Pakistan abandoned all notions of restraint, if China and Taiwan opted to

fight instead of negotiate, and if North Korea

and South Korea erupted into all-out war. Because actions always speak louder than

words, the United States’ wise previous admonitions to show restraint in the aforementioned

conflicts would fall upon deaf ears as the nations would instead follow our dangerous lead.

There is another equally important reason

that I must oppose this resolution. It is because to vote for it would be to effectively abdicate my Constitutional duty as a Member of

Congress to declare war when conditions call

for such action. The resolution before us does

authorize the President to declare war without

the basis of imminent threat. Congress may

not choose to transfer its duties under the

Constitution to the President. The Constitution

was not created for us to be silent. It is a body

of law that provides the roadmap of democracy and national security in this country, and

like any roadmap, it is designed to be followed. Only Congress is authorized to declare

war, raise and support armies, provide and

maintain a navy, and make the rules for these

armed forces. There is nothing vague or unclear about the language in Article I, section 8,

clauses 11–16 of our Constitution. In it, we are told that Congress has the power:

To declare war, grant letters of marque and

reprisal, and make rules concerning captures on land and water;

To raise and support armies, but no appropriation of money to that use shall be for a

longer term than two years;

To provide and maintain a navy;

To make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces; and

To provide for calling forth the militia to exe-

cute the laws of the union, suppress insurrections and repel invasions.

This system of checks and balances, which

is essential to ensuring that no individual or

branch of government can wield absolute

power, cannot be effective if one individual is

impermissibly vested with the sole discretionary authority to carry out what 535 Members of Congress have been duly elected by

the people to do. It is through the process of

deliberation and debate that the views and

concerns of the American people must be addressed within Congress before a decision to

launch our country into war is made. The reason that we are a government of the people,

for the people and by the people is because

there is a plurality of perspectives that are

taken into account before the most important

decisions facing the country are made. Granting any one individual, even the President of

the United States, the unbridled authority to

use the Armed Forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and

appropriate is not only unconstitutional, but is also

the height of irresponsibility.

Saddam Hussein is indeed an evil man. He

has harmed his own people in the past, and

cannot be trusted in the future to live peacefully with his neighbors in the region. I fully

support efforts to disarm Iraq pursuant to the

resolutions passed in the aftermath of the gulf

war, and I do not rule out the possibility that

military action might be needed in the future to

see that those efforts come to fruition. I voted

for the Iraqi Liberation Act in 1998 and still

stand behind my decision to support the objective of helping the people of Iraq change

their government. But that legislation contained an important caveat that precluded the

use of United States armed forces to remove

the government from power, and instead provided for various forms of humanitarian assistance.

That Act, now has the effect of law, and

unlike Iraq, we are a nation that respects the

rule of law. And our Constitution, the supreme

law of the land, sets forth the duties and responsibilities of Congress in clear, unambiguous language.

The indictment against Saddam Hussein is

nothing new. He is a despot of the worst kind,

and I believe that when the United Nations

Security Council passes a resolution determining his present status and outlining a plan

for the future, that will provide further documentation for Congress to act on a military option in Iraq. Right now, however, we are moving too far too quickly with many alarmist representations yet undocumented.

Some of us have begun to speculate about

the cost that a war in Iraq might be. And while

our economy now suffers because of corporate abuse and 2 years of a declining economy with high unemployment, I cannot help

but to shudder when I think of what the cost

might be—not only in dollars—but in human

lives as well. My constituents, in flooding my

offices with calls and e-mails all vehemently

opposed to going to war, have expressed their

concerns about the unacceptable costs of war.

One Houston resident wrote, ‘‘This is a war

that would cost more in money and lives that

I am willing to support committing, and than I

believe the threat warrants. Attacking Iraq is a

distraction from, not a continuation of the ‘war

on terrorism’.’’ I truly share this woman’s concerns. In World War II, we lost 250,000 brave

Americans who responded to the deadly attack on Pearl Harbor and the ensuing battles

across Europe and Asia. In the Korean war,

nearly 34,000 Americans were killed, and we

suffered more than 58,000 casualties in Vietnam. The possible conflict in Iraq that the

President has been contemplating for months

now risks incalculable deaths because there is

no way of knowing what the international implications may be. Consistent talk of regime

change by force, a goal not shared by any of

the allies in the United Nations, only pours fuel

on the fire when you consider the tactics that

a tyrant like Saddam Hussein might resort to

if he realized that had nothing to lose. If he

does possess chemical, biological or nuclear

weapons, we can be assured that he would

not hesitate to use them if the ultimate goal is

to destroy his regime, instead of to disarm it.

With that being the case, there can be little

doubt that neighboring countries would be

dragged into the fray—willingly or otherwise—

creating an upheaval that would dwarf previous altercations in the region or possibly in

the world. The resolution, as presently word-

ed, opens the door to all of these possibilities

and that is why I cannot support it.

Because I do not support the resolution

does not mean that I favor inaction. To the

contrary, I believe that immediate action is of

the highest order. To that end, I would pro-

pose a five-point plan of action:

1. Diplomacy first;

2. Unfettered, robust United Nations weapons inspections to provide full disarmament;

3. Monitoring and review by United Nations

Security Council;

4. Soviet Union model of allied supported

isolation—support of democratization through

governance training and support of resistance

elements; and

5. Developing a more stringent United

States containment policy.

What I can and will support is an effort for

diplomacy first, and unfettered U.N. inspections. As the most powerful nation in the

world, we should be a powerful voice for diplomacy—and not just military might. Since we

are a just nation, we should wield our power

judiciously—restraining where possible for the

greater good. Pursuing peace means insisting

upon the disarmament of Iraq. Pursuing peace

means insisting upon the immediate return of

the U.N. weapons inspectors. Pursuing peace

and diplomacy means that the best answer to

every conflict and crisis is not always violence.

Passing this resolution, and the possible repercussions that it may engender, will not enhance the moral authority of the United States in the world today and it will not set the stage

for peace nor ensure that are providing for a

more peaceful or stable world community.

Instead, as we ensure that Iraq does not

possess illegal weapons, we should make

good on the promise to the people that we

made in the passage of the 1998 Iraqi Liberation Act. We should do all that we can to assist the people of Iraq because as President

Dwight Eisenhower said, ‘‘I like to believe that

people in the long run are going to do more

to promote peace than our governments. Indeed, I think that people want peace so much

that one of these days, governments had better get out of the way and let them have it.’’

I oppose this resolution—H.J. Res. 114.