Mr. Speaker, the vote we are debating today will be the most significant vote

that we cast during this Congress and

perhaps during our entire careers. I say that for two reasons.

First, this vote may very well send

our American soldiers into what has

been called on this floor ‘‘harm’s way.’’

Make no mistake about it, it is important to note that is a very nice and

sanitary way of saying that our soldiers will be going to war. They will

face combat conditions that our forces

have not seen during most of our lifetimes. According to the military experts and the generals I have heard

from, the casualty rates may be high.

If, as some expect, Saddam Hussein

uses chemical and biological weapons

to defend Baghdad, the results will be horrifying.

Mr. Speaker, I have been in combat;

and I am not willing to vote to send another soldier to war without clear and

convincing evidence that America or

our allies are in immediate danger and

not without the backup and support of allied forces.

The President delivered a good

speech on Monday evening. I agree

with him that Saddam Hussein is a

ruthless dictator and that he is trying

to build an arsenal of weapons of mass

destruction. However, he showed us no

link between Iraq and September 11,

nor did he produce any evidence that

even suggests that America or our allies are in immediate danger.

This morning we learned from the

CIA that Saddam Hussein is unlikely

to use chemical or biological weapons

if unprovoked by a U.S. military campaign. Most alarming about that news

today is the report concludes by saying

that, if we attack, the likelihood of

him using weapons of mass destruction

to respond would be ‘‘pretty high.’’

Second, this vote is a radical departure from the foreign policy doctrine

that has served us honorably for the

past 200 years. This radical departure

to an unprovoked, preemptive first-strike policy creates what I believe

will be a grave new world. This new

foreign policy doctrine will set an

international precedent that tells the

world, if they think their neighbor is a threat, attack them.

This, I believe, is precisely the wrong

message for the greatest Nation, the

only true superpower Nation and the

most wonderful democracy our planet

has known, to send to Russia and Chechnya, to India and Pakistan, to

China and Taiwan, and to whomever

else is listening. And one thing we know, everyone is listening.

For these two reasons, I cannot support a resolution that does not first require that all diplomatic

options be exhausted, that we work with the United

Nations Security Council, and that we

proceed to disarm Iraq with a broad base of our allies.

I appreciate the President’s new position that war is the last option and

that he will lead a coalition in our effort in Iraq. But, unfortunately, that is

not what this resolution says. This resolution is weak at best on exhausting

the diplomatic options and relinquishes to the executive branch Congress’ constitutional charge to declare

war. I believe that is wrong.

We must address the potential danger

presented by Saddam Hussein. The first

step should be the return of the U.N.

weapons inspectors; and they must

have unrestricted and unfettered access to every square inch of Iraq, including the many presidential palaces.

We must then work with the Security

Council to ensure the strictest standards, protocols, and modalities are in

place to make certain that Hussein

cannot weasel out of any of these inspections.

Finally, we need to amass the allied

support necessary to carry out the inspections in a manner that will guarantee Iraq is completely stripped of all

weapons of mass destruction and left

unable to pursue new weapons of this type.

We had great success in building a

coalition to fight terrorism, and we

should do no less when it comes to disarming Saddam Hussein. We must respect

international order and international law in our efforts to make

this world a safer place.

With our military might, we can easily gain superiority over anyone in the

world. However, it takes more than

military might to prevail in a way that

provides hope and prosperity, two ingredients that make it less likely for

terrorism to breed and impossible for

repressive dictators to rule.

Mr. Speaker, if it is the decision of

this Congress to go to war, I will support our troops 1,000 percent. However,

I saw Baghdad and I know fighting a

war there will be ugly and casualties

may be extremely high. Let us exhaust

the diplomatic options, return the weapons inspectors, continue to build

an international coalition so Saddam

Hussein sees the world, not just the U.S. at the end of the gun. By doing

this, we can avoid sending our soldiers

into combat in Baghdad unless it is absolutely the last option.