Mr. Speaker, today our Nation

is debating the very profound

question of war and peace and the

structure and nature of international

relations in the 21st century.

Before us today is the serious and

fundamental question of life and death:

whether or not this Congress will give

the President authority to commit this

Nation to war.

Always a question of the greatest importance,

our decision today is further

weighted by the fact that we are being

asked to sanction a new foreign policy

doctrine that gives the President the

power to launch a unilateral and preemptive

first strike against Iraq before

we have utilized our diplomatic options.

My amendment provides an option

and the time to pursue it. Its goal is to

give the United Nations inspections

process a chance to work. It provides

an option short of war with the objective

of protecting the American people

and the world from any threat posed by

Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

The amendment urges the United

States to reengage the diplomatic

process, and it stresses our government’s

commitment to eliminating

any Iraqi weapons of mass destruction

through United Nations inspections

and enhanced containment.

It emphasizes the potentially dangerous

and disastrous long-term consequences

for the United States of codifying

the President’s announced doctrine

of preemption.

The administration’s resolution forecloses

alternatives to war before we

have even tried to pursue them.

We do not need to rush to war, and

we should not rush to war. If what we

are worried about is the defense of the

United States and its people, we do not

need this resolution.

If the United States truly faced an

imminent attack from anywhere, the

President has all of the authority in

the world to ensure our defense based

on the Constitution, the War Powers

Act and the United Nations Charter.

Our own intelligence agencies report

that there is currently little chance of

chemical and biological attack from

Saddam Hussein on U.S. forces or territories.

But they emphasize that an attack

could become much more likely if

Iraq believes that it is about to be attacked.

This is a frightening and dangerous

potential consequence that requires

sober thought and careful reflection.

President Bush’s doctrine of preemption

violates international law, the

United Nations Charter and our own

long-term security interests. It will set

a precedent that could come back to

haunt us.

Do we want to see our claim to preemption

echoed by other countries

maintaining that they perceive similar

threats? India or Pakistan? China or

Taiwan? Russia or Georgia?

I would submit that we would have

little moral authority to urge other

countries to resist launching preemptive

strikes themselves. This approach

threatens to destabilize the Middle

East, unleash new forces of terrorism

and instability and completely derail

any prospects for peace in the region.

Unilateralism is not the answer.

Iraqi weapons of mass destruction are a

problem to the world community, and

we must confront it and we should do

so through the United Nations.

Multilateralism and steadfast commitment

to international law should be

the guiding principle as we move into

the 21st century.

As I said, the purpose of my amendment

is to let the United Nations do its

work. Let us give inspections and other

containment mechanisms a chance to

succeed once again. Inspections did

make real progress in eliminating

weapons of mass destruction in the

1990s despite Saddam Hussein’s best effort

at obstruction and deceit. U.N. inspectors

destroyed large stockpiles of

chemical weapons, missiles and weapons

of mass destruction. We can and

should renew and expand this process.

In addition to inspections, we should

improve border monitoring through an

enhanced containment system to prevent

shipments of nuclear materials or

other weapons to Iraq. And we should

install surveillance technology on the

border to detect such materials.

As part of enhanced containment, we

should work with the countries bordering

Iraq and with regional seaports

to ensure that United Nations Security

Council resolutions are enforced, and

we should plug holes in the current

arms embargo blanket. We should also

work on nonproliferation efforts globally

to secure weapons materials.

All of these are diplomatic options

that we can and should undertake and

which can lead to success.

What we are doing today is building

the framework for 21st century international

relations. It will either be a

framework of unilateralism and insecurity

or multilateral cooperation and security.

It is our choice.

During the Cold War, the words ‘‘first

strike’’ filled us with fear. They still

should.

I am really appalled that a democracy,

our democracy, is contemplating

taking such a fearsome step and really

setting such a terrible international

precedent that could be devastating for

global stability and for our own moral

authority.

We are contemplating sending our

young men and women to war where

they will be doing the killing and the

dying. And we, as representatives of

the American people, have no idea

where this action will take us, where it

will end and what price we will pay in

terms of lives and resources. This too

should cause us to pause. We have

choices, however, and we have an obligation

to pursue them, to give U.N. inspections

and enhanced containment a

chance to work.

What this resolution does state very

clearly and firmly is that the United

States will work to disarm Iraq

through United Nations inspections

and other diplomatic tools. It states

that we reject the doctrine of preemption,

and it reaffirms our commitment

to our own security and national interests

through multilateral diplomacy,

not unilateral attack.

I urge you to protect our national interests

by giving the United Nations a

chance by supporting this amendment.

It does not foreclose any future options.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of

my time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself

the remaining time.

My alternative gives the United Nations

a chance to do its job while we

think through the ramifications of our

actions, how many lives would be lost,

what will this cost our economy. It

provides a very pragmatic opportunity

to step back and explain to the American

people the implications of authorizing

a war. It will give us an opportunity

to explain to the American people

what our own intelligence agency

means, and let me quote this, ‘‘Our intelligence

agency says should Saddam

conclude that a U.S.-led attack could

no longer be deterred, the probability

would become much less constrained in

adopting terrorist action.’’

Our action today could cause a reaction

of catastrophic proportions, not

only in terms of Saddam Hussein but in

the destabilization of the Middle East

and the setting of a dangerous precedent.

I plead with my colleagues to oppose

this rush to war. It is morally wrong, it

is financially irresponsible, and it is

not in our national security interest.

We must wait, we must ask these questions,

we must know what the economic

impact is. We must know what

this does in terms of the loss of lives of

our young men and women.

This is a day that we must urge reflection.

We must urge this body to become

attentive to the unanswered

questions that are out there. If our own

intelligence agencies say to us that authorizing

the President’s resolution to

go to war; that is, supporting that effort

to wage war, could be a provocative

act against our country, that it

could destabilize the region, that it

could lead to possible terrorist action,

that is very terrifying, Mr. Speaker.

I believe that the House of Representatives

must say no to establishing

this dangerous precedent. We

must not rush to war. We must give the

United Nations time to do its work. Inspections

worked in the 1990s. We must

use the time that the United Nations

needs, use that time for us to think

through, to debate, and to be truthful

to the American people. They deserve

it. We need to be truthful with them as

to what the cost of this rush to war

would mean.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance

of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support

of the motion to recommit.

We know that for every action there

is a reaction. We do not know what

danger lies before us. Every American

has the right to know what price in

terms of human lives and economic resources

that they will have to pay. We

owe them some answers. This is about

life or death. We owe them answers to

the questions the gentleman from Ohio

has raised and will raise, and far more.

In a democracy the people have a right

to know.