Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of

the Spratt amendment to H.J. Res. 114. I applaud

the respected gentleman from South

Carolina, Mr. SPRATT, for his hard work and

good sense on this amendment.

This proposal is not perfect. I also question

whether this amendment will, in practice,

serve as an adequate check on the Administration’s

rush to act unilaterally in Iraq.

But this Amendment is by far the best option

we have on the floor today. It recognizes

what the other two options on the floor do not:

that while the U.S. may ultimately need to act

alone to disarm Iraq, we should do so only if

it is absolutely necessary.

The Spratt Amendment authorizes the use

of the U.S. armed forces to support any new

U.N. Security Council resolution that mandates

the elimination, by force if necessary, of all

Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

If, in the absence of a satisfactory U.N. Security

Council resolution, the President determines

it is necessary to proceed with force, it

calls on the President to seek the authorization

of Congress and provides expedited consideration

for authorization.

I firmly believe that military force should not

be used until after the U.N. inspections. Force

should not be used until all diplomatic channels

have been exercised. And we should

clearly understand what will be required for rebuilding

the country. There are several good

aspects of the Spratt Resolution worth emphasizing:

it discusses force in the context of disarming

Saddam Hussein, not as regime

change; it places the burden of enforcing U.N.

resolutions on the U.N. Security Council; and

it allows the U.S. to act if the Security Council

does not adequately fulfill its responsibility.

This is a reasoned approach that rejects the

use of unilateral action, of preemptive action,

and preserves the checks and balances that

are required of our government.

I urge my colleagues to support the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday

during a pancake breakfast at a firehouse in

my hometown, one of my constituents sat

down with me. ‘‘Why have we gotten into this

headlong rush into war,’’ he asked? Why

haven’t we first exhausted all the other possibilities

for dealing with Saddam?’’ His questions

reflected both my feelings and those of

so many other Americans: Where is the pressing

need to send our Nation, our servicemen

and women, into a potentially bloody, costly

war that could threaten rather than strengthen

our national security?

I will vote ‘‘no’’ on this resolution.

It is true that Saddam Hussein has for years

presented a threat to his own people, to the

Middle East, to the world. His relentless pursuit

of weapons of mass destruction is unconscionable.

We have a legal and a moral obligation

to hold him accountable for his flagrant

violation of international law and his maniacal

disregard for human decency.

I applaud the President for refocusing international

attention on the Iraqi threat. This is

something that I have followed with concern

since I worked in the State Department 15

years ago on nuclear nonproliferation. However,

I believe it is at the least premature, and

more likely contrary to our national interest, for

Congress to authorize military action against

Iraq now.

As I reviewed the arguments for and against

this resolution, I found myself returning repeatedly

to some basic questions. Would unilateral

American military action against Iraq reduce

the threat that Saddam Hussein poses? In

other words, would a Saddam facing certain

destruction be less likely or more likely to unleash

his weapons of mass destruction on his

neighbors, his own people, or on Americans?

Will an attack against Iraq strengthen or weaken

our more pressing effort to combat al

Qaeda and global terrorism? Will it bolster our

ability to promote our many other national security

interests around the world and make

Americans more secure? I believe the answer

to all of these questions is a resounding no.

Why should we undertake action that makes

more likely the very thing we want to prevent?

A cornered Saddam Hussein could release his

arsenal of chemical, biological, and possible

nuclear weapons on American soldiers or on

his neighbors in the region, including Israel.

The CIA recently reported that Iraq is more

likely to initiate a chemical or biological attack

on the United States if Saddam concludes that

a U.S.-led invasion can no longer be deterred.

In addition, I am also concerned that a unilateral

American invasion of Iraq would send a

destabilizing shockwave throughout the Middle

East and ignite violent anti-Americanism, giving

rise to future threats to our national security.

While I have no doubt that we can successfully

depose Saddam Hussein, I am concerned

that the act of extinguishing Saddam

would inflame, rather than diminish, the terrorist

threat to the United States. And the ensuing

anti-American sentiment could reinvigorate

the terrorists’ pursuit of the loose nuclear

weapons in the former Soviet Union—a greater

threat than Iraq, I might add, one that

American has largely neglected.

The Administration has tried and failed to

prove that Saddam’s regime is a grave and

immediate threat to American security. It has

also simply failed to explain to the American

public what our responsibilities would be in a

post-Saddam Iraq. How will we guarantee the

security of our soldiers and the Iraqi people?

How will we guarantee the success of a

democratic transition? How many hundreds of

billions of dollars would it cost to rebuild Iraq?

This resolution would give the President a

blank check, in the words of many of my constituents,

and would allow him to use Iraq to

launch a new military and diplomatic doctrine.

By taking unilateral, preemptive military action

against Iraq, we would set a dangerous precedent

that would threaten the international

order.

Instead, we can and should take the lead in

eliminating the threat posed by Saddam Hussein

not by taking unilateral military action. If

we consult actively with our allies in the region,

with NATO, with the U.N. Security Council,

we will be able to undertake effective inspections

and end Saddam’s threat. I do not

believe that we need the permission of our allies

to take action, but I do believe that we

need their partnership to be successful in the

long run.

As the world’s leading power, we should

use the full diplomatic force at our disposal to

work with our allies to get inspectors back into

Iraq without any preconditions—including access

to Saddam’s presidential palaces. We

can and we will disarm Iraq and end

Saddam’s threat. The United Nations and the

international community may recognize the

need to take military action. The American

people will understand and be prepared for

that possibility. Now, they are not. Now, they

are saying that, for the United States, war

should and must always be our last resort.

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