Mr. Speaker, I thank

the gentleman from Illinois for yielding

me this time.

Mr. Speaker, let me just take a moment

to appreciate this body. I had resolved

to cherish my last days in this

body by being as attentive as I could to

everything that I had the privilege of

experiencing.

For the past 2 days, I have watched

my friends in this body, from both

sides of the aisle, from both sides of the

issue, conduct what has to be regarded

as one of the greatest debates we have

seen in this body during my tenure

here. I have been struck in the last 2

days with the sobriety, the thoughtfulness,

the eloquence, and the respect

with which the countervailing positions

have been presented. And I would

like to say thank you to my colleagues

for letting me be part of this debate.

The distinguished minority leader,

the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT),

had a sentence in his speech we

heard just a minute ago where he said

we had to see the facts with clarity. To

see the facts with clarity. This is not

an ideological debate. This is not a debate

about philosophy. This is a debate

about the sober business of safety in

the face of danger, honor in the face of

fear, responsibility in the face of timidity.

We must turn to the facts when we

face issues of this gravity, and we have

done that.

Intensely, for the last month or so,

most of us have been looking at the

facts that we hoped we would never

have to pay attention to. Let me just

relate some of my travels in this past

month through the facts.

Is Saddam evil? Who could doubt it?

The evils that this man perpetrates, as

described on this floor by our young

colleague, the gentleman from Wisconsin

(Mr. RYAN), from a book he read

from, strike terror in the heart of the

worst that we have ever seen before.

This man is evil. It is an evil that

this world should never have to observe

and that the poor victims, particularly

those in Iraq, should not have to live

with on a daily basis. The atrocities

are beyond belief, beyond tolerance.

And those poor people in Iraq live with

it each day, afraid to leave their home,

afraid to speak at their own dinner

table, frightened for their children who

might be tortured in order to punish

the parents’ careless moment.

Saddam is evil. That is a fact.

Does he have dangerous assets? More

so than we thought, more so than we

ever wanted to believe. And does he

have an ongoing, consistent program

and plan to acquire, to enhance those

evil assets that are described by the

term weapons of mass destruction, beyond

what any of us imagined?

The acquisition of the weaponry, the

resources, the resourcefulness, the ability

to put together the device that

would destroy hundreds of thousands in

a fell swoop has never been even mitigated

against by the commitments he

made to the U.N. 11 years ago.

Can he strike our interests, our citizens,

our land, and our responsibilities

with them? Irrefutably, yes. Through

the conventional means that we recognize

and fear, things like SCUD missiles,

yes. American people, American

citizens, American resources in his immediate

area, through the insidious

means that would be deployed by his

ongoing working relationship with a

myriad of evil terrorist organizations,

yes. Through simple-looking, innocent looking

little suitcases left in a train

depot, a service station, an airport in

Chicago, Illinois. Yes, he can strike us,

our interests and our responsibilities. I

know no other way to put that.

America is the most unique Nation

ever in the history of the world. We

have accepted responsibility for freedom,

safety, and dignity of people

other than ourselves. Those proud nations

with those brave people that live

as islands of freedom and hope within

seas of threat and terror look for and

understand they can depend upon the

protection of the United States. That

is who we are, that is who we have

been, our heroes, our parents.

They spent their heroism, they spent

their life all too often on foreign, distant

lands fighting for the freedom of

people other than themselves. No other

nation has ever done that like we have

done.

A nation such as Israel, not exclusively

Israel, but right now in the

world today, at a level of danger that is

unparalleled by any other nation of the

world, Israel struggles for its freedom,

safety and dignity; and it is in imminent,

immediate danger by a strike

from Saddam Hussein. And that represents

a responsibility we have, not

only to what role we have played in the

world, not only to our heroes who have

acted it out and sacrificed, but to the

character of this Nation that we cherish

and protect.

I have said it as clearly as I can. To

me, an attack on Israel is an attack on

America; and it is imminently in danger.

Will he do so? Who can doubt that?

He has a record of having done so that

is deplorable in the most evil and insidious

ways. The question is when will he

do so; not will he do so.

Why does one violate one’s own commitments

to the world, to the United

Nations accord with resolve, and consistently

acquire these resources if you

have no intent to use them? Why do

you deny your own citizens the resources

for food and shelter and clothing

and health care in order to divert

that to the expenditure on weapons of

mass destruction and instruments of

horror if you do not intend to use

them? Why would he deny his own

clear volitions in actions past if he had

the resources to strike? Saddam will

strike.

Is action against Saddam compliant

with the character of our great Nation?

I struggled with this. It was a hurdle

for me for a long time. It all gets involved

with this question of preemptive

strike.

First of all, it is not a preemptive

strike. This is a man who has consistently

been in violation of his own commitments

to the world for 11 years. As

I put it, this snake is out of his hole.

We are not striking an innocent here,

we are correcting an error of complacency.

So it is not a question of a new

doctrine.

But even if we were to examine the

doctrine of preemptive strike, let us

not forget the Cuban missile crisis. An

embargo on the high seas is an act of

war, and the threat to us I would submit

was not as dangerous as it was at

that time, and it was certainly not so

insidious as it is today.

There have been other instances in

our history. When necessary, America

does what it needs to do to keep America

safe. America does have a pride

which is exhibited in movies like ‘‘13

Days’’ for the courage that was displayed

when the action was necessary.

There is an argument that this is a

diversion from the war on terrorism. If

we are going to conduct a war on terrorism,

then we must stop that person

who is most likely and most able to

arm the terrorists with those things

which will frighten us the most. A

strike on Saddam is an integral part, a

necessary part, of the war on terrorism.

Now we turn to questions about our

ability. Can we be swift and decisive

and conduct this operation with minimal

risk to the brave men and women

that we ask to carry it out?

It is possible. We saw that in Desert

Storm. It is even more possible now. It

will be a difficult operation, and our

people will be at risk. But we have the

resources and the resourcefulness, and

we have the ability to plan and execute

an operation that rids the world of this

scourge conducted by our young men

and women and their allies in such a

manner to keep them at minimal risk.

That is all we can do, the moral imperative

that we have, when we ask our

brave young men and women who have

volunteered to serve this Nation and

the world in the cause of freedom, to

take the field of danger, we have an obligation,

and we can say we can construct

the plan, outfit you in such a

way, support you in such a manner

that you can carry out this deed with

minimal risk. We can do that. We will

do that. We have an administration.

We have a Secretary of Defense that respects

our people.

Should we vote this resolution that

says in effect that we, the Congress of

the United States, the representation

of the people of the United States, say,

Mr. President, we trust you and we rely

on you in a dangerous time to be our

Commander-in-Chief and to use the resources

we place at your disposal? Yes,

even by two bills we will vote on later

today, to protect freedom? The answer

is, yes.

Mr. President, we are about to give

you a great trust. Those brave young

men and women who have volunteered

in our Nation’s military services of

their own free will to take their place

in history alongside the American heroes

of the past deserve our respect and

our support, Mr. President. We trust

that you will plan for them, use them,

care for them, and be guided by your

own notion of tender mercies.

But we also have an obligation to the

parents, the children, the siblings, the

grandparents of those brave young men

and women. We lend our children to

the cause of liberty. I have said so

many times. I do not care if he is 240

pounds of solid muscle, the brightest

kid in the class, when he puts on that

uniform, he is my baby and I have fear,

and I demand that you treat him properly

as his Commander-in-Chief.

We all have that right to expect. Can

we expect that from this President? I

would say so.

Mr. Speaker, I was speaking yesterday

with the gentleman from Indiana

(Mr. BUYER), who remembered embarking

for Desert Storm, saying good-bye

to his family. At the last moment, he

approached his father, proud veteran of

the Korean War with his veteran’s hat.

His proud father put his hands on

Steve’s shoulder and looked at him and

said, ‘‘You are the best I have to give.’’

Mr. President, we trust to you the

best we have to give. Use them well so

they can come home and say to our

grandchildren, Sleep safely, my baby.