Mr. Speaker, I want to take

just a few minutes to outline my thoughts on

the Resolution before the House today and

the reasons why I have decided I must vote in

its favor.

Throughout the past few months, I have

been supportive of efforts that would allow our

nation to first pursue Iraq’s compliance with

existing U.N. resolutions and eventually engage

our allies in a united effort to force a regime

change in Iraq. Early discussions and

versions of the Congressional Resolution on

which we are about to vote had very broad

authorities for the President associated with

the threat posed by Iraq—something that

caused concern for me and many of my colleagues

on both sides of the political aisle.

As more evidence of Iraq’s growing ability to

develop and deliver weapons of mass destruction

has emerged, I think it is clear that the

patience required to avoid armed conflict must

be balanced against the severe and catastrophic

consequences of waiting too long to

act. We simply cannot wait to act, either with

the United Nations or unilaterally, until Iraq actually

uses its weapons of mass destruction

against its enemies or completes its development

of a working nuclear weapon. I believe

a recent dossier on Iraq, written by the British

Government, clearly illustrates the threat

posed by Saddam Hussein. Among its findings

were the following:

Iraq has continued to develop chemical and

biological weapons, including anthrax, mustard

gas, sarin nerve gas, and VX nerve gas;

Iraq has military plans for the use of chemical

and biological weapons, some of which

are deployable within 45 minutes;

Iraq has developed mobile laboratories for

the production of biological weapons;

Iraq has tried to covertly acquire technology

and materials for use in the production of nuclear

weapons;

Iraq has sought uranium from South Africa

despite having no active civil nuclear power

program that might need it;

Iraq is in various stages of development and

deployment of a number of missile systems

capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction

over vast distances; and

Iraq has learned a great deal from past experiences

with weapons inspections and has

undertaken an aggressive program to conceal

sensitive equipment and documentation in the

event weapons inspectors return in the future.

To even the most cynical critic of armed

conflict, these realities have to represent a

clear and present danger to the security of the

middle-east and an undeniable threat to the

security interests of the United States.

I think it is also important to note that the

development and possession of these weapons

of mass destruction by Iraq are in direct

violation of international law. Iraq, under a variety

of U.N. resolutions, is required to destroy

its vast inventory of these weapons under the

supervision of the United Nations. Sadly, this

is not the only way in which Iraq has violated

its international obligations. In 2002 alone,

Iraqi forces have fired on U.S. and British pilots

406 times and continue this hostility every

day. In addition, recently released classified

photos shows Iraq rebuilding its weapons factories

and U.S. National Security Advisor

Condoleezza Rice recently revealed that Iraq

provided training to al-Qaida in chemical

weapons development and trained terrorists—

information corroborated in the British Dossier.

I want to commend President Bush and

leaders of both parties of Congress, including

House Speaker DENNIS J. HASTERT and House

Minority Leader RICHARD GEPHARDT, for working

together, setting political differences aside,

and drafting the Resolution before us today. I

firmly believe this Resolution provides the

President the authority he needs to protect the

American people and the rest of the world

from Saddam Hussein’s growing appetite for

weapons of mass destruction—including nuclear

weapons. At the same time, the Resolution

leaves open the possibility for a peaceful

end to this international crisis and places the

responsibility for avoiding armed conflict directly

on Saddam Hussein. His actions over

the coming weeks will determine whether the

United States, Great Britain, and a number of

our allies are forced to act to protect the world

from his own aggression.

Specifically, the Resolution:

Authorizes the President to defend the U.S.

by military force against threats from Iraq, and

enforce existing U.N. Security Council resolutions;

Requires the President to determine that

further diplomacy initiatives will not adequately

protect our national security;

Requires a report to Congress at least every

60 days on the status of efforts to protect the

U.S.;

Authorizes action by the President consistent

with the War Powers Resolution; and

Contains a sense of Congress resolution

supporting the President’s efforts to obtain a

U.N. Security Council resolution to ensure that

Iraq immediately complies with all relevant Security

Council resolutions.

I want to report that this Resolution is not

the blank check for war that some of its opponents

are portraying it to be. In fact, this Resolution

leaves plenty of room for a peaceful resolution

to this conflict, urges cooperation with

the United Nations and our allies, and ensures

Congress’s constitutional role is protected.

While I have been a proponent of seeking

the participation of our allies in any action we

might take against Iraq, I think it is important

to remember that we have the right to act unilaterally

in the defense of our nation and its interests.

This resolution protects that right while

recognizing the importance of securing the cooperation

of the international community.

Although I feel it is regrettable that we are

now at a point where we must consider armed

conflict with Iraq to protect the world from its

aggression, it is impossible to ignore any

longer the devastating risks of continued inaction.

Saddam Hussein is solely responsible for

bringing the United States and the international

community to this point. While I remain

hopeful we can find a peaceful resolution

to this dispute, the overwhelming body of evidence

points to only one conclusion—Saddam

Hussein must be disarmed immediately

through either his actions or our own.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I will vote in

support of the Resolution before us today and

stand behind President Bush in his efforts to

protect our nation from the horrors Saddam

Hussein seems committed to unleashing on

his enemies and the world.