Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong

support of H.J. Res. 114, to provide authorization

for the use of military force against Iraq.

While I hope and pray President Bush does

not have to commit our troops to such action,

I believe that he must have the authority he

needs to protect U.S. national security interests.

The events of September 11th showed us

that we are not protected from an attack on

our homeland. A first strike made with weapons

of mass destruction can result in millions

dead, and the U.S. must be prepared to act

preemptively.

I did not reach this conclusion easily, Mr.

Speaker. But in a world with biological, chemical,

and nuclear weapons, a first strike capability

carries with it the possibility that it will be

the last strike, with millions left dead in its

wake.

There can be no doubt that Saddam Hussein

possesses and continues to cultivate

weapons of mass destruction; the U.N. weapons

inspectors were thrown out of Iraq four

years ago for a reason. In addition, we know

that he is violating the U.N.’s oil-for-food program

to the tune of several billion dollars a

year; rather than feeding innocent Iraqi citizens,

this is money that is undoubtedly being

spent on the development of weapons of

mass destruction. And we know that if he is

able to buy a softball-sized amount of plutonium

on the black market, he will have a nuclear

weapon within a year.

Some of my colleagues ask why we must

act against this threat in particular, when there

are many other threats of a grave and serious

nature confronting us as we wage a global

war against terror. The answer is that this

threat is unique; an evil dictator has gathered

together the most serious dangers of our time

in one place. In Iraq we see Saddam stockpiling

weapons of mass destruction, and I trust

I need not remind anyone that he has used

such weapons already, against his own people.

In addition, he has tried to dominate the

Middle East, 2nd has struck other nations in

the region, including our ally Israel, without

warning.

Some of my colleagues have suggested that

disarming Hussein will dilute the war against

al-Qaeda, but I believe that the opposite is

true; these dual goals are inextricably linked.

We know that Saddam has harbored and

trained high-level al-Qaeda who fled to Iraq

after we invaded Afghanistan. Indeed, there

can be no doubt that Saddam and al-Qaeda

share a common enemy: The United States of

America, and the freedom we represent. And

let me be clear: either could attack us at any

time.

Keeping this in mind, it seems to me that

we, as guardians of freedom, have an awesome

responsibility to act to ensure that Saddam

Hussein cannot carry out such a first

strike against the United States or our allies.

Mr. Speaker, some of my colleagues object

to this Resolution because we do not have a

groundswell of international support for military

intervention. The distinguished Chairman of

the international Relations Committee has

highlighted the key question as regards this

issue: on whom does the final responsibility

for protecting ourselves rest? Is it ours or do

we share it with others?

While there is no doubt that unqualified support

from the United Nations is preferable, we

must be prepared to defend ourselves alone.

We must never allow the foreign policy of our

country to be dictated by those entities that

may or may not have U.S. interests at heart.

Mr. Speaker, the Resolution before us does

not mandate military intervention in Iraq. It

does, however, give President Bush clear authority

to invade Iraq should he determine that

Saddam is not complying with the conditions

we have laid before him. Chief among these

conditions is full and unfettered weapons inspections;

if Saddam fails to comply, as has

been the unfortunate historical trend, we will

have no choice but to take action. Our security

demands it.

Mr. Speaker, the world community watching

this debate ought not conclude that respectful

disagreements on the Floor of this House divide

us; on the contrary, we find strength

through an open airing of all views. We never

take this privilege for granted, and we need

look no further than to Iraq to understand why.

Let us not forget those who continue to suffer

under the evil hand of Saddam. To take

just one example, the more than one and a

half million Assyrians in Iraq have been displaced

from their ancestral homes, tortured,

raped, murdered and caused to suffer every

conceivable degradation at the hands of the

Hussein regime. They have much to lose in

any failed effort to remove Saddam, yet they

fully support President Bush.

And they certainly will not stand alone. As

President Bush noted in his address to the nation

on Monday, ‘‘When these demands are

met, the first and greatest benefit will come to

Iraqi men, women and children. The oppression

of Kurds, Assyrians, Turkmen, Shi’a,

Sunnis and others will be lifted. The long captivity

of Iraq will end, and an era of new hope

will begin.’’ In other words, as in Afghanistan,

when given hope, an oppressed people will

rise up and seize the opportunity for freedom.

At the end of this debate, Congress will

speak with one voice. I have no doubt that the

world will witness the same expression of

unity as was demonstrated by Americans

across the country following the attacks on

September 11th. I find comfort in the knowledge

that this unity represents a promise that

we will never back down from preserving our

freedoms and protecting our homeland from

those who wish to destroy us, and our way of

life.