Mr. Speaker, 12 years ago,

I came to this floor and voted, with a heavy

heart, to authorize military action against Iraq

after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Sadly,

I rise today to support another resolution

which once again authorizes the use of military

force against Iraq and Saddam Hussein.

I think everyone agrees that military action,

especially unilateral action, should never be

undertaken lightly, and that judicious thought

must be given to the consequences of such

action. While I strongly believe that diplomacy

is always preferable, it has become clear to

me that we can no longer afford to ignore the

threat posed by Saddam Hussein and his brutal

regime.

It has been well documented by previous

speakers today that since the end of the Persian

Gulf War, the threats posed by Iraq have

actually increased rather than diminished. For

more than a decade, Saddam has persisted in

violating numerous United Nations resolutions

designed to ensure that Iraq does not pose a

threat to international peace and security. At

the same time, he has consistently tried to circumvent

U.N. economic sanctions against his

brutal regime. Iraq continues to breach its

international obligations by pursuing its efforts

to develop a significant chemical and biological

weapons capability, actively seeking nuclear

weapons capability and supporting and

harboring terrorist organizations.

Given his abysmal record for violating international

obligations, there is no reason to believe

that Saddam can be trusted to abide by

his most recent promises for cooperation.

Rather than making a true commitment to

international peace, his latest statements are

nothing more than ruse designed to give him

ore time to further strengthen his own arsenal

of weapons to use against us and our allies.

We cannot sit idly by and let Saddam Hussein

wreck havoc on the world. Nor can we afford

to wait until another terrorist attack claims

the lives of more innocent Americans. History

has taught us that there are severe consequences

for inaction against a brutal dictator.

The United States is unique because it is

the only country whose very existence was

based on an idea—the idea of freedom; it is

an idea that must be constantly guarded. It is

a noble but a fragile thing that can be stolen

or snuffed out if not protected.

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that the use

of military force can be avoided but we cannot

shy away from it out of fear. Giving the president

the authority to use military force as a

last resort may be the best way to avoid actually

having to us it at all.

I urge my colleagues to support H.J. Res.

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