Mr. Speaker, I rise to

speak against this resolution. We all recognize

that Suddam Hussein is a tyrant and that he

is a dangerous enemy. The question is whether

this resolution is the right way to address

the threats presented by his regime.

The Administration says that Iraq presents

an imminent threat to the United States, that

unless we give the President carte blanche to

launch a unilateral, preemptive attack, we will

be subject to attack by weapons of mass destruction.

No one needs to convince us of the

horror of weapons of mass destruction or the

evil intentions of Saddam Hussein. But does

that justify the blank check this resolution

gives the President? We have listened to the

testimony, read the briefs, and weighed the arguments

presented by the Administration. In

my view, they have yet to prove their case.

They have presented no credible evidence

that the United States faces imminent attack.

They have presented no credible evidence

that Iraq was involved in the September 11th

terrorist attacks or that it is giving material aid

to those involved in those attacks.

Are we setting the bar too high? I don’t think

so. The evidence of imminent threat should be

credible, conclusive and irrefutable if we are

talking about the United States unleashing the

dogs of war. Striking the first blow is unprecedented

in American history. It has always

been a point of honor that the United States

does not start wars. If we are going to depart

from a fundamental principle that has guided

U.S. foreign policy for more than 200 years,

the evidence of necessity must be iron clad.

This is much more than a point of pride. It

is not an abstract argument. Through this action,

the world’s only remaining superpower is

asserting a principle that the nations of the

world—including the United States—have

struggled to consign to the past. We have rejected

the old idea that any nation which

claims to feel threatened or aggrieved can unilaterally

and preemptively attack another without

the sanction of the international community.

The power to initiate war is no longer

untrammeled and absolute. Think for a moment

of the precedent we are setting, of the

pandora’s box we are opening. What if, tomorrow,

India or Pakistan says the other constitutes

an unacceptable threat? Would this

justify one of these nuclear-armed countries

attacking the other? What about China and

Taiwan? What about any number of other

countries whose relations with a neighbor are

beset with tension, suspicion, threats, and insecurity?

More immediately, what about our relations

with our allies, the nations on which we depend

to help us keep the peace and bear the

burden of protecting our interests? We should

be careful not to initiate a new age of American

unilateralism that leaves us without allies.

The Administration thinks they are dispensable

in the case of Iraq. Maybe they are. But if our

alliances fray and disintegrate, it is certain that

there will come a time when we do need

them. Will they be there for us? Maybe,

maybe not. But one thing we can be sure of:

it is foolhardy in the extreme to ignore our allies’

importance to the system of international

relations and the maintenance of America’s

prosperity and national security interests.

I have every confidence that our troops will

display the bravery and professionalism we

have come to expect from them. But the consequences

of a U.S. victory are liable to be a

huge burden for the United States. We will

have taken on the responsibly for peace and

order, for feeding and sustaining an entire

population, and guaranteeing the territorial integrity

of Iraq. All this in the context of a population

which may or may not be receptive to

the presence of our armed forces. We will

have to counter the centrifugal dynamics that

drive the Kurds in the north and the Shiites in

the south away from the Iraqi state. We will be

responsible for defending Iraq’s long border

with Iran against incursions. We are talking

about committing tens of thousands of troops,

perhaps hundreds of billions of dollars, for

many years, maybe decades.

And what will be the impact of an invasion

in the rest of the Muslim world? The reaction

will not be an outpouring of support for the

United States. It will feed the flames of fanaticism.

It could well destabilize Egypt, Jordan

and other friendly nations. Are we prepared to

commit more troops, more money, more prestige

to shoring up these governments?

Finally, let me offer some observations as a

member of the Armed Services Committee.

Implications of a war against Iraq will reverberate

at every level of the Department of Defense.

Problematic issues the military faces

today—global international commitments, increased

personnel tempo, and over-reliance

on the Reserves and National Guard—will

only be exacerbated when military requirements

for Iraq are thrown in the mix.

Of foremost concern is the inevitable enormous

strain on military manpower. Secretary

of Defense Donald Rumsfeld testified before

the Armed Services Committee that no increase

in troop end strength is necessary to

carry out an invasion and peacekeeping activities

in Iraq. No one else whom our Committee

spoke to held this opinion. In fact, retired flag

officers and distinguished military analysts all

agreed that increased end strength was imperative for the ultimate

success of our reconstruction of Iraq.

And the personnel problem extends far beyond

the full time, active duty forces. Since

the Persian Gulf war, our reliance on the Reserves

and National Guard has grown to the

point where it would be impossible for DoD to

meet its worldwide commitments without the

presence of these units. Reservists and

Guardsmen no longer talk about the rare mobilization

in support of a national emergency;

rather, some units routinely deploy overseas

alongside their active duty counterparts. How

long can we continue to call upon these volunteers

to shoulder more than their fair share?

How long can we ask civilian employers and

families of our Guard and Reserve to carry on

without them? I sincerely hope that one of the

first orders of business in the 108th Congress

is a comprehensive overhaul of our military

personnel system in order to ease the stress

on our citizen soldiers. Otherwise, our Reservists

and Guardsmen are sure to vote with their feet.

These considerations do not exhaust the

questions raised by the prospect of an attack

on Iraq. Serious as they are, the most serious

questions of all are the ones none of us can

anticipate. War has a way of creating new dynamics

and unleashing new forces in the

world. All too frequently, those consequences

are inimical to the interests of established

powers. Those who see the dawn of a new

era of peace, stability and democracy in the

Middle East as a result of a strike against Iraq

would do well to think again.