Mr. Speaker, President Bush spoke on Monday

night about the many threats Saddam

Hussein poses to international security

and why the President believes

he should have the authority to launch

a preemptive, unilateral attack on Iraq

to force a regime change in that nation.

While I respect the President and his

sincerity in seeking this authority, I

am not convinced that such an attack

is in the best interest of our Nation.

We all agree that Saddam Hussein is

a dangerous man, yet that is not the

topic under discussion here tonight. We

are debating whether a unilateral military

invasion is the best way to address

the threats posed by Iraq. I must vote

no on this grave issue because I am not

persuaded that a preemptive, unilateral

attack is the most effective way to

control Saddam Hussein.

I agree with President Bush that the

United States, in conjunction with our

allies in Europe and the Middle East,

must make a new effort to readmit a

weapons inspectors into Iraq. A new inspection

policy must give U.N. personnel

unfettered access to any and

every facility and have the ability to

conduct unannounced surprise inspections.

This new effort needs the full

and vigorous cooperation of the U.N.,

NATO and nations in the Middle East.

A united front is essential to success,

and the international community must

join the U.S. in enforcing U.N. resolutions.

As we survey the international community,

however, nations in Europe

and the Middle East, including key allies,

range from lukewarm to downright

hostile to the idea of launching a

solo strike against Iraq. Many nations

would react negatively to such an action,

viewing such a preemptive U.S.

attack as overly aggressive.

The world’s response to our attack

could easily include a global anti-

American backlash, severely hampering

our ability to fight the war on

terrorism, build security and peace in

the Middle East, and protect vital U.S.

interests. We must not forget that the

war on terror requires the support and

cooperation of our key allies in the

Middle East, Europe and around the

world. We rely on these nations to root

out terror cells within their borders

and share with us important information.

We must also remember that since

the end of the Gulf War the U.S. has

kept a close eye on Iraq. We have maintained

a strong military presence in

the region, imposed sanctions, conducted

thousands of military flights

over no-fly zones, and focused our intelligence

community on Baghdad. We

have made clear that any misbehavior

by Saddam would be met immediately

by overwhelming force. As a result of

our deterrence, Saddam Hussein has

not attacked Saudi Arabia, Israel, Kuwait

or others since the Gulf War because

he knows that such a move

would bring the full weight of the U.S.

and the world upon him. His desire to

cling to power supersedes his hunger

for conquest.

If we strike first, we change that dynamic.

Knowing his survival would be

at stake, Saddam would have a powerful

incentive to use every weapon in his

arsenal to defeat American troops. He

might target Israel, hoping to fan the

flames of conflict between Israel and

the Arab world to create chaos in the region.

I am concerned that our preemptive

unilateral strike would trigger the

very events we hope to avoid: regional

war, rampant instability, and use of

weapons of mass destruction.

We also must recognize that a preemptive

unilateral attack against Iraq

would represent a major shift in American

diplomatic and strategic thinking.

For nearly 50 years we relied upon

deterrence to check upon Soviet expansionism.

Deterrence brought us victory

in the Cold War without having to

fight a hot shooting war under the

shadow of nuclear annihilation. That

same strategy has kept Iraq at bay for

more than a decade.

Now that doctrine is on the verge of

being discarded. The potential consequence

of such a shift in strategic

thinking includes an emboldened China

moving against Taiwan, Russia acting

aggressively against the nations of her

former empire, and India and Pakistan

attacking each other with nuclear weapons.

There are several other critical questions

to which we have heard very few

answers. We must have a clear plan on

how an attack on Iraq would transpire,

including identifying our military options,

determining our strategy to

change the regime, calculating the potential

casualties, and estimating how

much an operation would cost and how

it would be funded. We must also see a

plan to build democratic and free market

institutions in a post-Saddam Iraq.

History teaches us that how we win the

peace is just as critical as how we win

war. Thus far these critical issues have

received scant attention.

The international community has an

important obligation to ensure that

Saddam Hussein cannot repeat the aggression

of his past; and as the world’s

most powerful country, we have a commitment

to lead. Through U.N. inspections,

continued monitoring, and increased

scrutiny of Bagdad we can

meet that responsibility. We cannot,

however, move in a unilateral manner

that could jeopardize the peace and security

of the Middle East if not the

world. I must vote ‘‘no’’ on H.J. Resolution

114 and urge my colleagues to do the same.