Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, any nation engaged in a

program of building weapons of mass

destruction presents a danger to international

peace and stability. Any leader

who flouts the rule of law is a menace

to liberty and democracy.

In my mind, the President has made

a strong case that Iraq must disarm,

pursuant to the United Nations resolutions

enacted following the close of the

Persian Gulf War. But the President

did not convince me that we should go

to war and go it alone, nor has he made

the case that we should change our

longstanding policy and defy international

law and commit to a first strike.

The threat posed by Iraq is a threat

which confronts the entire world, not

just America. This resolution before us

gives the President authorization to

send American troops into Iraq to

strike unilaterally and, indeed, to

strike first. Congress has never before

granted this extraordinary power to

any previous President. We can address

the threat posed by Saddam Hussein

without expanding Presidential authority

beyond constitutional standards.

A declaration of war is the ultimate

act of humankind. It presumes to

endow the declarant with the right to

kill. In many instances, it amounts to

a sentence of death, not just for the

guilty but for the innocent as well,

whether civilian or soldier. In measurable

respects, that is why the Framers

of our Constitution wisely assigned the

power to commit America to war not

to the President but to the people’s

democratic representatives in Congress.

The President should approach Congress

and ask for a declaration of war

when and only when he determines

that war is unavoidable. The resolution

before us leaves the question of war

open-ended by both expressing support

for diplomacy and authorizing the

President to use force when he feels it

is the correct course of action. Yet, in

his own words, President Bush stated

that ‘‘war is not unavoidable.’’ So why,

then, is he insisting on being given

now, today, the power to go to war?

We are the lone superpower economically

and militarily in the world. Our

words have meaning, our actions have

consequences beyond what we can see.

The implications of a unilateral first

strike authorization for war are

chilling. A unilateral attack could lead

the world into another dangerous era

of polarization and create worldwide

instability. It would also set a dangerous

precedent that could have a devastating

impact on international norms.

Consider India and Pakistan, Armenia

and Azerbaijan, Russia and

Chechnya, Cyprus, Taiwan, Colombia,

Northern Ireland, Central Africa. How

might the people or the government in

any of these countries which are engaged

in or at the brink of hostilities

interpret this resolution today? Why

should not other countries adopt the

President’s unilateral and first strike

policy to address conflicts or threats

themselves? Would not a unilateral attack

galvanize other potential enemies

around the globe to strike at the

United States and our interests?

In our efforts to focus on what the

President described as a grave and

gathering danger thousands of miles

away in Iraq, let us not lose sight of

the dangers which are grave and

present, not gathering but present,

here at home: the al Qaeda plots targeting

our airports, our water treatment

facilities, our nuclear power

plants, our agricultural crops.

Just this Tuesday, CIA director

George Tenet told Congress that Saddam

Hussein, if provoked by fears that

an attack by the United States was imminent,

might help Islamic extremists

launch an attack on the United States

with weapons of mass destruction. We

must consider how our actions may impact

on the safety of the American people.

The answer may not be always what we expect.

We must also ask, will the death and

destruction it takes to eliminate a sovereign,

albeit rogue government, lead

to good will by the Iraqi people toward

America and Americans?

Well, let us look at the record. During

the Gulf War of 1999, we dropped

some 250,000 bombs, many of them

smart bombs, over a 6-week period on

Iraqi forces. That is close to 6,000

bombs per day. We deployed over

500,000 troops. The war cost over $80

billion. None of that money was spent

on reconstruction in Kuwait, and all of

this is what it took simply to expel

Iraq from tiny Kuwait.

And what is our, and for that matter

the world’s, recent record on supporting

post-war reconstruction? Ask

the people of Bosnia and of Kosovo, and

now ask the Afghanis.

Certainly there are situations where

the United States must prepare or be

prepared to act alone. I voted in September,

2001, to give the President that

power to punish those who attacked

this Nation on September 11. But the

question is, are we at the point on the

question of Iraq to go to war without

international support?

Mr. Speaker, the President was clear

in his speech on Monday. Iraq can lead

us down a dangerous course, but I believe

it is time for us to recognize that

if we do this, we do this together, not alone.

Let us vote for the separate resolution,

go the right way and send a good

message, not just to Iraq but to the

rest of the world.