Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from

Florida (Mr. GOSS) for not only his

leadership as chairman of the Permanent

Select Committee on Intelligence

but also for the gentleman’s leadership

in the debate on this issue on this floor.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the

resolution, but I want to take a moment

to thank my colleagues who seek

a peaceful solution to this crisis. I, too,

would prefer peace to war.

As Thomas Jefferson wrote to Andrew

Jackson in 1806, ‘‘Always a friend

to peace, and believing it to promote

the happiness and prosperity of mankind,

I am ever unwilling that it

should be disturbed, as long as the

rights and interests of the Nation can

be preserved.’’

Jefferson went on to say in this letter,

when our rights and interests are

threatened, ‘‘we must meet our duty

and convince the world that we are just

friends and brave enemies.’’

Mr. Speaker, the rights and the interests

of our Nation are threatened

today. Voting to send our military into

battle, even potential battle, is among

the hardest things we will do as Members

of Congress. It is not a duty to

take lightly. However, I have come to

the realization that there are times

when such votes are necessary. This is

one of those times.

The threat to our Nation from Saddam

Hussein’s weapons programs and

his growing ties to the networks of

international terror cannot be underestimated

and should not be ignored.

Willful blindness to this threat will not

make it go away.

In a little more than a decade, we

have sent our Armed Forces to war on

behalf of the Kuwaitis, the Saudis, the

Somalis, the Bosnians, and the

Kosovars. Some in our military made

the ultimate sacrifice.

It may soon prove necessary to send

our troops to war on behalf and in defense

of the American people. I cannot

in good conscience ignore the dangers

posed by Iraq to my constituents, including

the servicemen and women who

call North Carolina home. Inaction on

our part may very well be more costly

to our Nation than action. The threat is real.

As a member of the Committee on

Energy and Commerce, I have heard

testimony from countless officials on

the status of our Nation’s preparation

for chemical and biological attacks. I

know firsthand the need to eliminate

this threat while we continue with our preparation.

As a member of the Permanent Select

Committee on Intelligence, I have

reviewed the evidence of Iraqi’s weapons

programs and its increasing ties to

international terror. I have participated

in countless hearings on the terror

threat and the state of the war

against terrorism. I have seen, heard

and read things that keep me awake at night.

Iraq brings the dangers of chemical

and biological weapons, their use, and

international terrorism together in one

clear, defined threat. Addressing this

threat is mandated by our duty to protect

our Nation’s rights and interests.

The reason for my support of this

resolution, Mr. Speaker, is simple. No

matter how well we protect our borders,

increase our military spending

and strengthen our intelligence community,

we cannot secure our homeland

without eliminating the threat

Saddam Hussein’s weapons present to

America and to the world. We must

find them. We must destroy them. We

must be prepared to take action when

the international community will not,

and we must fulfill our duty.

I will conclude with President Jefferson’s

letter to John Adams in September

1821. ‘‘The flames kindled on

the 4th of July, 1776, have spread over

too much of the globe to be extinguished

by the feeble engine of despotism;

on the contrary, they will consume

these engines and all who work them.’’

One wonders what President Jefferson

would say about the weapons available

to our enemies on this day at this

time. Today, the bright flames of July

4th find themselves in struggle with

the dark fires of September 11. Those

fires, lit by the enemies of freedom,

cannot be allowed to prevail. Will we

allow them to advance, possibly in the

ashes of a nuclear holocaust, or will we

extinguish them before they gain a

foothold? Those dark fires may not

have been lit in Baghdad, but they are

certainly fanned from that city.

It is time to extinguish those fires.

The evidence is clear, the cause is just,

and timing is of the essence. We must

give our President the tools he needs to

protect our Nation, our interests, and

our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to

support this resolution.