Mr. Speaker, when I

was elected to the United States House

of Representatives, I took an oath to

protect and defend the United States

against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Fortunately, in my 10 years in Congress,

we have had few opportunities to

vote on authorizing the use of military

force to protect our country from these

enemies. Authorization of military

force is one of the most solemn decisions

that we can make as Members of

Congress, and it is a decision that must

be made only after thoughtful and

prayerful consideration.

Our Nation now faces a clear and

present danger from the regime of Iraqi

President Saddam Hussein. Saddam

has been without international supervision;

and I have received information,

both from public and from classified

hearings, that suggests that the

Iraqi regime could be merely months

away from attaining the necessary resources

to complete his mission of developing

nuclear weapons.

Saddam has made it clear that he

will do whatever is necessary to prohibit

inspections of his compounds for

the purpose of determining the extent

to which he has stockpiled the necessary

components to produce these

weapons. He has the technology and

the know-how to build such a device.

All that he lacks is materials. The Intelligence

community says that Iraq is

3 to 5 years away from developing a nuclear

device if it has to produce its own

nuclear bomb material, and months

away if it acquires this material from

outside sources. The problem is, we do

not know when the clock started on either

scenario.

Additionally, Saddam’s government

has repeatedly violated the 1991 ceasefire

agreement that ended the Persian

Gulf War and Iraq’s obligation to unconditionally

disarm its weapons of

mass destruction. Not only does Saddam

Hussein continue to halt the will

of the international community with

regard to inspections, he continues to

shoot at coalition aircraft patrolling

the northern and southern no-fly zones

daily.

For us not to recognize the clear and

present danger that the Iraqi regime of

Saddam Hussein represents to our

country would be tragically wrong. We

must protect and defend our Nation

against this madman and his ability to

destroy tens of thousands of Americans.

The resolution authorizing the use of

military force that we are considering

today gives the President the flexibility

and authority he needs to protect

the American people while, at the

same time, preserving the prerogatives

of Congress.

The findings at the beginning of this

resolution offer more than enough evidence

of Saddam Hussein’s crimes. The

authorization in section 3 has been appropriately

modified in a bipartisan

manner. It authorizes the use of military

force as the President determines

necessary and appropriate to: ‘‘(1), defend

the national security of the

United States against the continuing

threat posed by Iraq; and (2), enforce

all relevant United Nations Security

Council resolutions regarding Iraq.’’

The resolution also requires a timely

‘‘presidential determination’’ that all

means short of war have been exhausted,

and that acting pursuant to

this authorization is consistent with

ongoing activities in the war against

terrorism.

Finally, this resolution contains reporting

requirements to ensure that

Congress and the American people are

fully apprised on all matters relevant

to this resolution and that both are

full partners in an effort to rid the

United States of the Iraqi threat.

Mr. Speaker, September 11 changed

our country and the world forever. For

all of these reasons, I intend to vote in

favor of the resolution and encourage

my colleagues to do the same.