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

Mr. Speaker, our Nation is on the

verge of opening a new front in the

global war on terror. It is a front

fraught with peril. It is a front that

may send thousands of young Americans,

men and women, to uproot a

ruthless dictator that has committed

unspeakable acts against his own people

and wrought havoc on the world.

No decision is more difficult, more

wrenching for a U.S. President, the

Congress, or the American people than

to commit our soldiers and our Nation’s

prestige to a military conflagration.

It is for this reason that we must

consider all possible diplomatic and

military options short of war.

As noted 19th century French author

Guy de Maupassant wrote, ‘‘Every government

has as much of a duty to avoid

war as a ship’s captain has to avoid a

shipwreck.’’

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong

support of the Spratt substitute to

House Joint Resolution 114. It offers

the best and most certain way to

achieve our objectives of disarming

Iraq of weapons of mass destruction

and the best chance of avoiding a hasty

decision to go to war. It is a sensible,

prudent approach to managing the use

of force by our country.

Eleven years ago, then President

George Bush created one of the most

impressive multinational coalitions

that the world has ever seen. He very

wisely determined that it was not in

our Nation’s interest to act unilaterally

to liberate Kuwait.

The Spratt substitute is informed by

that experience. It limits the opportunity

of our current President for unilateral

action to liberate Iraq.

I am pleased that President George

W. Bush has engaged the U.N. during

the current crisis. I am grateful that

he has recognized that our Nation

should work with the United Nations

Security Council and allow weapons inspections

to go forward and this process to occur.

I am relieved the President said that

war is not inevitable. And I am encouraged

that he has said that he would

give a diplomatic course to disarm Iraq

through a U.N. process every chance to

work ahead of using force.

Mr. Speaker, the Spratt resolution

guarantees the President’s stated intentions

are made law. As set forth in

the Spratt substitute, our Armed

Forces should take action only against

Iraq only in conjunction with a new

U.N. Security Council resolution that

calls for the complete elimination of

Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction.

If the U.N. Security Council resolution

is violated or the U.N. does not

act, the President would need approval

from Congress for unilateral action,

and then only after making certain important

certifications to Congress.

Thus, this vote would occur only if the

President has certified that further

U.N. action is not forthcoming, force

remains the only viable option, a

broadbased international coalition is

being formed, and the global war on

terrorism would not be adversely affected

by an Iraqi invasion.

Mr. Speaker, there is no such thing

as prudent haste. It is an understatement

to say that we should take the

time for calm deliberation by the Congress

in a proceeding uncomplicated by

any question other than whether we

should commit to a course of action

that may cost a heavy toll in human

lives, hundreds of billions of dollars,

and the good will of the international

community. I urge support of the Spratt substitute.

But what is our course if

Spratt is not adopted? What then is the

best course for us to address the threat

of terrorism and the threat of the use

of chemical and biological weapons in

the hands of a brutal dictator? What is

our best chance to evoke the response

from Iraq that will lead to unfettered

weapons inspections and eventual disarmament?

With long and careful thought I have

come to the conclusion that the leadership

of Iraq will only submit to a credible

disarmament process based on inspections

if it is faced with a credible

threat of the use of force. It is the use

of force authorization that I pray will

never be used. And it is the use of force

authorization that should never be

used unilaterally. After Spratt, H.J.

Res. 114 provides the only remaining

prudent chance to stem these new

threats of unthinkable horrific terror

that our Nation and the world now

face, threats that we are now only just

beginning to understand. It is a chance

that I believe our country through this

Congress must commit to take at this time.