Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the substitute

resolution offered by the gentleman

from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT) and in opposition to the

Hastert-Gephardt resolution.

The Spratt-Allen-Price-Snyder-Clyburn

- Matsui - Larson -Moran- Reyes -

Levin resolution recognizes the danger

posed by Iraq’s possession and development

of weapons of mass destruction,

and it recognizes the need to enforce

United Nations resolutions providing

for the destruction of these weapons

and of the capacity to produce them.

It authorizes the President to utilize

armed forces to protect and support

arms inspectors and to undertake enforcement

actions under U.N. auspices.

It does not, however, give the President

open-ended authorization to use

force unilaterally or preemptively. For

that he would have to come to Congress

for a specific vote after other

means had been exhausted.

As the gentleman from South Carolina

(Mr. SPRATT) has testified, ‘‘A second

vote is not an imposition on the

President’s powers. It is the age-old

system of checks and balances and one

way Congress can say that we prefer

for any action against Iraq to have the

sanction of the Security Council and

the support of a broadbased coalition.’’

An up-or-down congressional vote on

a resolution authorizing force is a

blunt instrument at best. And regardless

of which resolution passes, the

President and Congress and the country

will still face critical decisions

down the road. The Iraqi threat, as

grave as it is, must be assessed in the

context of other antiterrorist and diplomatic

objectives. After all, the war

against al Qaeda is hardly won. It is

critical, as the Spratt resolution

states, that action against Iraq not imperil

international cooperation in the

fight against terrorism or displace related

diplomatic endeavors such as pursuit

of an Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

Moreover, a complex of policies is either

already in place or is envisioned in

the resolutions before us: a regime of

coercive inspections; U.N. enforcement

of the mandate to disarm; readiness for

a devastating response to any aggressive

Iraqi military action; no-fly zones;

intense surveillance; a tight embargo

on strategic and dual-use materials.

Could these policies contain, deter, and

ultimately disarm Iraq, making a military

invasion unnecessary and enabling

us to attend to other equally important antiterrorist priorities?

We cannot answer that question now.

But should we not know that answer

before we authorize a massive military

invasion which surely represents an extreme option?

We should not make this congressional

vote any blunter an instrument

than it needs to be. We are being asked

to line up behind an open-ended resolution

that has been improved by hortatory language but still authorizes

the President to invade unilaterally or

preemptively under circumstances,

weeks or months hence, that we cannot

possibly foresee. This, we are told, will

help the administration influence the

U.N. Security Council and apply maximum

pressure on Iraq. Now, that is

not a negligible argument; but it does

not do justice to our duty, as members

of a coordinate branch of government, to help set national policy.

Our job is to provide a responsible

and rational guide to policy, should

compliance and enforcement fail. The

open-ended resolution requested by the

President would represent an abdication of that responsibility.

The Spratt resolution with its required

second vote would give us the

means to exercise our constitutional

role more fully and with better command

of the facts. And, no less than

the Hastert-Gephardt resolution, it

would serve notice now of our resolve

to see United Nations resolutions

upheld and Iraq disarmed.

Our concern about granting open-ended

authority to make war should be

heightened as we consider the administration’s

recently enunciated ‘‘doctrine’’

of the right of one country to

take preemptive or even preventative

military action against hostile states.

This doctrine goes far beyond the

recognized right of anticipatory self-defense.

A unilateral attack on Iraq would be

difficult to justify under existing

standards, for even the Bush administration

has not consistently argued that the threat to the U.S. from Iraq is

imminent. But we must ask how this

new doctrine would play out as other

nations eagerly adopt it and act on it

for their own purposes.

As former Secretary of State Henry

Kissinger recently stated, ‘‘It cannot

be either in the American national interest

or in the world’s interest to develop

principles that grant every nation

an unfettered right of preemption

against its own definition of threats to its security.’’

Mr. Speaker, the question before us

is not whether but how best to address

the threats posed by Iraq’s weapons

programs and its continued defiance of the world community.

A purely military response, particularly

one taken unilaterally or preemptively,

would have costs and risks that

should lead us to regard it as a last resort.

We must deal with the threat in ways that do not compromise our

broader war on terrorism and that

maintain the support and engagement of our allies.

The Spratt substitute resolution

keeps these priorities straight. It upholds

Congress’ role in authorizing military operations, not indiscriminately,

but under specific conditions

for specific purposes. It is vastly preferable

to the open-ended Hastert-Gephardt

resolution, and I urge its adoption.