There are many things that make me

proud to be an American. One of them

is to be here today to be able to debate

this issue. As my previous colleague

stated when he quoted a general that

said that war is hell, take it from

somebody that has been there. Thirtyfive

years ago, I found myself half a

world away in a place called Vietnam.

I can tell my colleagues that war is

hell. There are a lot of us here today

that have had that same experience,

but are taking different positions on

this resolution. Some of my colleagues

have asked why, when they hear my

friend and colleague, the gentleman

from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM), talk

about his experience and his favoring

in support of the resolution.

I will tell my colleagues that I intend

to vote against this resolution. I intend

to do so because in meetings I have

held in my district, mothers and fathers

and veterans come to me and tell

me, please, do not let us get back into

a war without exhausting all other avenues.

I think every one of us in this

House brings our own experiences as we

represent our constituents. Every one

of us here wrestles with a very tough

decision as to whether or not to go forward

with a resolution on war. Every

one of us understands that we are a nation

of laws, that we lead the world by

example, that we have a great respect

for process and to protect the rights of

everyone.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I reluctantly

today rise in opposition against

this resolution, because I think that

the President has not made a case as to

why Iraq and why attack Saddam Hussein.

As a member of the Committee on

Intelligence, I have asked consistently

the questions to those that have come

before us with information, I have

asked the question of what is the connection

between 9–11 and Iraq and Saddam

Hussein. None.

What is the connection between Iraq

and Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda?

Very little, if any.

As to the weapons of mass destruction,

the delivery systems and all of

these things, we have clearly heard

that there is a lot of speculation about

those capabilities.

Last week, I was part of a group of

colleagues that met with a retired general

that was in charge of this conflicted

area of our world. He was asking

the same question that we were: Why

Iraq, and why Saddam Hussein?

In fact, when we asked him to list in

priority order a war against Iraq and

Saddam Hussein, he listed it as his seventh

priority. When we asked him,

what would you do in our situation, he

was as perplexed as we are being in this

situation.

September 11 changed things. I concede

that. More than that, for me personally

being a first-time grandfather

changed things as well. I bring to this

position and to this decision the experience

that I brought as a Member of

Congress.

My staff asked me, Congressman,

what are you going to say to the

troops? Because I have taken the opportunity

to go out and visit our troops

in Afghanistan three times since

Easter. I know the conditions they are

living in, and I know the conditions

they are fighting in. Those are similar

to the same conditions of some 35 years

ago. War is hell, and we ought to exhaust

every single possible remedy before

going to war, before subjecting our

troops, our men and women in uniform,

to those kinds of consequences.

So I tell my staff, I will tell the

troops the same thing that I will tell

the American people on the floor of

Congress, that I oppose this resolution

because I think that the case has not

been made. I do not take giving my

support for war lightly, as neither do

my colleagues on both sides of the

aisle. But each one of us has to wrestle

with his or her own conscience.

I want to make sure that my granddaughter,

Amelia, maybe 35 years from

now, can look and say, my grandfather

made his decision on the information

that he had. He opposed the resolution

because he did not think it was the

right thing to do.

But I will tell the Members this:

When and if the President makes a decision

to commit troops, when and if

the President commits us to a war, I

intend to be there. Because my experience

in coming to this Congress, my

experience of some 35 years ago, returning

from Vietnam and seeing all

the protests and seeing all the signs

and seeing all the things that they

were calling us, was very divisive.

So it is inherent upon us to do what

our conscience dictates on this issue

today. I oppose it reluctantly under

those circumstances, but I will support

whatever decision our President and

our country makes.