Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the resolution, a

resolution which I believe will send a

clear and an unmistakable message to

our own citizens, our allies, and our enemies,

as well, that Congress stands behind

our President in defense of America’s

national security interests.

Mr. Speaker, there is no more serious

an issue for Congress to debate than

the question of authorizing the use of

America’s Armed Forces. We are a

peaceful Nation, preferring instead to

rely on diplomacy in our relations with other countries.

On the question of Iraq in particular,

the United States and the United Nations

have been exceedingly patient,

working steadily to integrate Iraq into

the community of law-abiding nations,

but to date we have failed. In the decades

since Desert Storm, Iraq has chosen

a very different path. Iraq has

worked to develop weapons of mass destruction,

including chemical and biological

agents; and Saddam Hussein

has repeatedly ignored U.N. resolutions

demanding that he disarm. He has refused

to allow weapons inspectors access

to potential sites. Thus, the threat

of obtaining stocks of these terrible

weapons continues to grow.

Most troubling of all, Saddam Hussein

has shown, has demonstrated, his

willingness to use such horrible weapons

against other nations and against

his own people. Only when military action

is imminent does the Iraqi regime

begin to discuss allowing inspectors to

return, but the restrictions they wish

to place on these inspectors would effectively

render their mission useless

and, instead, simply delay action and

allow a covert weapons program to

begin to bear terrifying results.

If we wait until Iraq succeeds in

achieving these goals, we will have

waited too long.

The resolution we are debating today

encourages a diplomatic solution to

the threat that Iraq poses to our national

security. The President has

called on the U.N. to act effectively to

enforce Iraq’s disarmament and ensure

full compliance with Security Council

resolutions. But if the U.N. cannot act

effectively, this resolution will provide

the President with full support to use

all appropriate means.

Mr. Speaker, neither I nor any Member

of this body want to see a renewed

conflict in Iraq. We must be prepared

to act give the President flexibility

that he needs to respond to this gathering

threat to protect American lives

and address the threat to global peace.

I urge my colleagues to support the resolution.