Mr. Speaker, the

World Trade Center is in my district,

and I just this moment returned from

traveling in the district with the President,

walking through the ruins of the

World Trade Center, where there are

thousands of bodies buried.

I have spent much of my career

speaking out against the use of military

force when I believed it was unwarranted.

In many ways, my political

awakening began with my active opposition

to the war in Vietnam. But, Mr.

Speaker, those of my colleagues who

are rightly skeptical of the use of

force, and who recognize how very reluctant

we must be when sending our

young men and women into harm’s

way, must understand the threat and

the stakes if we fail to act.

Many have said that the events of

Tuesday changed the world forever.

The world has not changed. The people

who carried out this murderous attack

on our Nation, the organizations which

recruited, trained, and supplied them,

the governments which gave them shelter

and support are still there. We now

know without any doubt what the price

of inaction, of appeasement, of willful

blindness will be.

The world has not changed, but I believe

the American people have. Our

Nation is now ready to recognize that

we have been in a war for many years.

Our people now recognize that if we do

not defend ourselves in that war from

those for whom our lives, our children,

and our way of life are a daily affront,

we will not survive as a Nation. We

must now exercise the right under the

United Nations Charter to collective

self-defense.

I wish we had a choice, but the

charred rubble and the thousands of

dead Americans lying just blocks from

my office in Manhattan, and the hundreds

more a stone’s throw from this

very building demonstrate that we

have no choice. We must pass this resolution.

We must wage the war that has

been thrust upon it. We must do it resolutely,

and we must be victorious and

rid the world of this scourge of terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, I have just returned from my

congressional district and walked with the

President through the ruins of the World Trade

Center. Somewhere in those charred and

twisted ruins lie the bodies of relatives,

friends, children, colleagues, neighbors, firefighters,

police officers, working people, and

innocent tourists.

I have spent much of my career speaking

out against the use of military force when I believed

it was unwarranted. In fact, in many

ways my political awakening began with my

active opposition to the war in Vietnam. But,

Mr. Speaker, those of my colleagues who are

rightly skeptical of the use of military force,

and who recognize how every careful we must

be when we consider sending our young men

and women into harm’s way, must look carefully

at this threat and understand the stakes

if we fail to act.

Many have said that the events of September

11, 2001, changed the world forever.

But if our lives were changed forever, the

world was not. The people who carried out

this murderous attack on our Nation, the organizations

which recruited, trained, and supplied

them, the governments which gave them

shelter and support, the fanatical leaders who

have whipped up hatred so great that young

people were willing to fly planes filled with innocent

civilians into crowded office buildings—

all of these despicable murders and demagogues

have been at work for years. The only

thing that has changed is that we have now

joined the family of nations which has far too

long paid a terrible price because we have

failed to act.

We now know without any doubt what the

price of inaction, of appeasement, of willful

blindness, will be. When we allow nations

which offer shelter and pay tribute to these

murders to pretend that they are our friends,

we get the betrayal we ourselves have invited.

Anyone who witnessed the mobs in the Palestinian

territories celebrating our tragedy in the

streets understands the attitude of our enemy

in this war; they shake your hand and then

cheer your pain.

So the world has not changed, but I believe

the American people have. Our Nation is now

ready to recognize that we have been in a war

for many years, and our people now recognize

that if we do not defend ourselves in that war

from those for whom our lives, our children,

and our way of life are a daily affront, we will

not survive as a nation.

The Constitution gives Congress the awesome

power to declare war and authorize the

use of military force in the defense of the Nation.

The United Nations Charter gives member

nations the right to ‘‘collective self-defense.’’

Tonight we do just that. I wish we had

a choice, but the charred rubble and the thousands

of dead just blocks from my office in

Manhattan, and the hundreds more a stones

throw this very building, demonstrate that we

do not.