Mr. Speaker,

the administration continues to assert

rightly that Saddam Hussein is an evil

dictator, but the administration fails

to explain how a preemptive war is in

the best interest of the American people.

On February 25 I introduced House

Joint Resolution 24 with the gentlewoman

from California (Mrs.

TAUSCHER) and the gentleman from

Pennsylvania (Mr. HOEFFEL.) The resolution

requires the President to submit

a new report to Congress that answers

eight specific questions. It includes a

sense of Congress clause that requests

the President present the report before

a public joint session of Congress.

It is our duty in Congress on behalf of

the American people to ensure that if

the President authorizes military force

against Iraq, that he first give Congress

a full accounting of the potential

cost and the potential consequences.

The two reports submitted to Congress

by the administration under requirements

of the October resolution

have failed to communicate the President’s

plans for Iraq. The administration

in reports included no indication

of the potential financial costs of the

war and its aftermath, no indication of

how weapons of mass destruction will

be secured, and no discussion of blowbacks,

the CIA term for terrorist actions

against the United States.

The second report clearly acknowledges

the magnitude of the task of reconstructing

and stabilizing Iraq, calling

it a massive undertaking. Unfortunately,

the report fails to explain how

this challenge will be overcome, what

level of financial, what level of political,

what level of military commitment

that the administration is willing

to make in Iraq after the war.

Before the U.S. initiates a preemptive

strike, something we have never

done before, without the consensus of

the U.N. Security Council and in the

absence of a clear, imminent threat to

the United States of America, the administration

must clearly explain to

the American people the short- and

long-term implications of attacking

Iraq. H.R. 24 asks, and the administration

should answer to the American

public and to Congress:

Have we exhausted every diplomatic

means of disarming Iraq?

Will America be safer from terrorism

if we attack Iraq?

How will we deal with the humanitarian

crisis that inevitably will follow

this war?

How will the war with Iraq affect our

already weak economy?

What will reconstruction of Iraq and

providing humanitarian assistance to

that country cost? And how long will it

take, how long will American troops

and civilians be stationed there and at

what cost?

How will attacking Iraq prevent the

proliferation of weapons of mass destruction,

when Korea and Libya and

other countries, and Iran, for instance,

are much further along with nuclear

development, we know, than Iraq is?

What will preemptive war do to the

stability of the Middle East?

Are we ready to commit to a decade

of military troops policing Iraq and the

billions of dollars needed to rebuild and

stabilize that country and make that

country, in the words of the President,

into a democracy?

These important questions need to be

answered to the American public before

President Bush decides preemptively,

without U.N. support, to attack another

country.

The Washington Post reported today:

‘‘The greatest source of concern among

senior army leaders is the uncertainty

and complexity of the mission in postwar

Iraq, which could require U.S.

forces,’’ and get this, ‘‘to protect Iraq’s

borders, referee clashes between ethnic

and religious groups, ensure civilian security,

provide humanitarian relief, secure

possible chemical and biological

weapon sites, and govern hundreds of

towns and villages.’’ Simply put, we

could be in the middle of a civil war.

How has the administration responded

to these concerns? With silence.

There are no legitimate plans for

reconstruction that anyone has seen.

There are no cost estimates for the

conflict or the post-conflict occupation.

There are no casualty estimates.

These are concerns we must address.

Retired Army Major General William

Nash commanded the first peacekeeping

operation in the Balkans in

1995. After the Gulf War in 1991, he occupied

the area around the Iraqi town

of Safwan on the Kuwaiti border almost

2 years ago. He told The Post that

during this time his troops dealt with

recurring murders, attempted murders,

‘‘ample opportunity,’’ in his words,

‘‘for civil disorder,’’ and refugee flows

they could never fully fathom. He went

on to say that 200,000 U.S. and allied

forces will be necessary to stabilize

Iraq. Two hundred thousand.

Note that he uses the term ‘‘allied

forces’’ in that total. If we continue on

the course we are on, there will be few

allied forces. Maybe Great Britain,

maybe a few Turks, if we pay them

enough, maybe a few Spaniards, maybe

a few Italians, but overwhelming almost

all of those 200,000 will be Americans

and we will be footing the bill

alone.

The civilian leadership at the Pentagon

and the Department of Defense

continually refuse to acknowledge the

enormity of the challenge in post-conflict

Iraq. They respond to inquires

with delay tactics and uncertain estimates.

I am certain of one thing, Mr. Speaker.

Any action against Iraq will be difficult,

costly, and dangerous if we do

not go to the U.N. Security Council.