Mr. Speaker, today,

before the Committee on Armed Services,

Secretary Rumsfeld, who has

made up his mind, said that the President

has not yet made up his mind

about a preemptive war and an invasion

and occupation of Iraq.

Now, when the Secretary was asked

how he reconciled that with the rush to

adopt a resolution authorizing the use

of force here in the House if the President

had not yet made up his mind and

could not articulate the case, he really

did not answer the question. To tell the

truth, I was a bit put off by that, but

that is a key question which needs to

be answered.

On September 5, I sent the President

a letter signed by 17 other Members of

the United States House of Representatives.

We were pleased that the President

had recognized the authority of

the Congress, the sole authority of the

Congress for declarations of war and

use and initiation of force, except in

the immediate defense of the United

States, as per the Constitution and the

War Powers Act; but that we felt that

the President had a number of very important

questions to answer before

Congress should even begin the debate

on such a resolution.

I fear they are really putting the cart

before the horse here. They want a resolution

without making the case. The

President gave an eloquent speech at

the U.N. last week, but many of the

things he talked about, the offenses of

Saddam Hussein were in fact things

that had happened during the Reagan

administration, during the administration

of Bush I, in fact, such as the horrible

gassing of people within his own

country and the U.S. aiding him in his

war against Iran before we dropped our

friendship and support of his horrible

regime. Many of these things took

place then.

Then he went on to make the case for

the U.N. resolutions which have been

violated. We agree there, that this is

an odious individual. He is not worthy

of leading any nation. He has gassed

and killed his own people, promoted religious

and ethnic strife, murdered all

his potential political opponents. I

wish he could be deported to another

planet, but right now, he is in power in

his country. Hopefully, some people in

his country will find a way to overthrow

him and get rid of him.

But the question for us in the United

States Congress is, should we authorize

the first ever preemptive war in the

history of the United States, and what

is the immediate and serious nature of

the threat that would have us break

from all precedents in our history and

all the precedents of international law?

Those are the questions that are embodied

in this letter.

Quite truthfully, thus far in both unclassified

and classified briefings, and I

cannot talk about what they did talk

about in classified briefings, but I can

tell Members what they do not talk

about in classified briefings. They have

not talked about anything in the classified

briefings that we have not read

in USA Today or heard on CNN, so they

have yet to make an effective case that

somehow he has been transmogrified

from this reprehensible dictator in a

mostly impoverished developing or

Third World country to this incredible

and immediate threat to the integrity

of the United States of America.

They can find no links to al Qaeda,

who is an immediate threat to the

United States of America. In fact, I

would say that we are being distracted,

as are many of our allies and friends,

and not-so-good allies and friends

around the world, from the pursuit of

al Qaeda and wiping out that threat by

propping up suddenly this new threat.

I think a lot of this, unfortunately, is

probably left over from his father’s administration.

Many of the foremost advocates

of this preemptive war served

in Bush’s father’s administration, and

are aggrieved that they did not then

so-called ‘‘finish the job.’’

But the same problems that confronted

Colin Powell then confront us

now. Probably his military is not that

significant; maybe, maybe not. Maybe

there will not be a lot of casualties.

Maybe this can be done without a lot of

civilian casualties. Sure, we can work

through all of that. But then what?

Then what?

I heard one Senator say that we are

going to rule Iraq. We are going to rule

Iraq, a country of more than 60 million

people with an unbelievably fractious

history, in the middle of the most volatile

region on Earth, with the problems

with the Shi’as and the Sunnis and the

Kurds and the Turks and all those

other things, and we are going to rule

Iraq?

They have to have not only an entrance

strategy and a rationale for this

war, they need an exit strategy that

they have to explain to the American

people and this Congress before they

should receive any sort of authorization

to do anything in that area.