Mr. Speaker, along with

a large majority of the House, I voted

for a resolution that reiterated our opposition

to the acquisition by Saddam

Hussein of Iraq of weapons of mass destruction.

But I am concerned that

some might try, quite inaccurately, to

take that large vote repeating our condemnation

of Saddam Hussein and our

insistence he comply with U.N. resolutions

regarding these weapons, that

some might mistake this as an expression

of support for a war in Iraq.

First of all, we should be very clear:

there is no legislation, no resolution

that has passed this House, that expresses

support for war in Iraq. The

post-September 11 resolution was explicitly

limited to involvement in the

attack on the World Trade Center. And

to date, no one has produced evidence,

as reprehensible as Saddam Hussein is,

as despicable as his regime, that he was

in any significant way involved in that.

Many of us, in fact many of us who

voted for the resolution, signed a letter

to the President reiterating we do not

believe it would be appropriate to commit

America to a major military action

in Iraq or anywhere else in the

world without a congressional vote.

And I would be, at this point, voting

against that.

We did a very good job in Afghanistan.

The American military made us

proud. And, by the way, that is the

American military that President Bush

inherited from President Clinton. All

during the campaign of 2000 candidates

Bush and CHENEY denigrated the American

military, claimed inaccurately

that Clinton had somehow left it impotent.

All of a sudden it got very good in

a hurry, because that very military

that President Bush inherited from

President Clinton showed a great capacity

in Afghanistan.

But as good as they were and as careful

as they were, innocent lives were

lost, property was destroyed, the economy,

already in tough shape, was disrupted,

food distribution was inhibited.

We had a moral right and a moral obligation

to go into Afghanistan. But having

done that, having unleashed significant

military power in that poor country,

for good moral reasons, I think it

is now an equal moral obligation to

show that we can work just as hard to

help rebuild the country, to help feed

people, and to help reconstruct it.

In the first place, I would say this:

until we have shown an equal ability

and commitment and dedication to giving

the people of Afghanistan a better

life, as we should, to helping them get

rid of that terrible regime, then I do

not think we have earned the right to

go do that somewhere else.

I do not think that we can simply go

from country and oppose destruction,

even when it is morally justified to go

after some bad people, without living

up to the second part that of commitment.

Secondly, an attack on Iraq, unlike

the war in Afghanistan, would be almost

universally opposed by a variety

of others. The Bush administration has

learned that going it alone is not the

best strategy. I am glad the Bush administration

has abandoned the kind of

unilateralism that unfortunately

marked its early months. But if we

now attack Iraq, we would be back in

that situation. In fact, any hope of further

cooperation with Arab regimes in

getting intelligence, in prosecuting

terrorists and continuing to go after al

Qaeda would be discouraged.

Mr. Speaker, I am no fan of the regime

in Saudi Arabia which is lacking

in so many respects; I have become increasing

disenchanted with Mubarak in

Egypt, but they, at this point, seem to

me better than what we would get as

an alternative if we were to launch an

attack on Iraq that could destabilize

those countries. And as King Abdullah,

the King of Jordan, in the tradition of

his father, seems to be a responsible individual

trying to do well, I do not

want to see those efforts undercut.

So it would be counterproductive in

the war against terrorism to go after

Iraq. I would love to see Saddam Hussein

out of power. He is a vicious and

brutal man, but to attack him militarily

at this point, engendering the

opposition this would engender in the

Muslim world, would be counterproductive

to our fight against terrorism.

Indeed, as a strong supporter of the

legitimate right of Israel for self defense,

which is now under attack from

the most irresponsible elements in the

Arab world, people should understand,

President Bush never said that he was

for a Palestinian state until after September

11. The political need to show

some connection to the Muslim world

moved him in that direction. I fear

greatly that an attack on Iraq, with all

of the negative consequences that

would have in the Muslim world would,

in fact, lessen rather than strengthen

America’s support for Israel’s legitimate

needs. I fear there would be a

tendency to trade-off a little bit of that

support for Israel at a time of great

crisis because of this.

Finally, they are not analogous. Not

only do we not have Saddam Hussein

not having attacked us the way the Afghan-

supported Taliban allowed al

Qaeda to do it, we do not have the

same situation. There is no Northern

Alliance. One of the things that helps

morally vindicate our effort in Afghanistan

was the obvious joy of so many

people in Afghanistan that we helped

rid them of this barbarous repressive

regime.

Saddam Hussein is not a lot better

than the Taliban, but I do not see in

Iraq the kind of opposition that would

allow us to do the same thing. So while

to continue to support the sanctions

and I continue to say we should work

with opposition within Iran, if possible,

to launch a military assault on Iraq

comparable to what we do in Afghanistan

would be counterproductive. I

hope it will not be done. Clearly, the

resolution we voted offers no support

for that.