Mr. Speaker, let me begin by commending

the gentleman from California for forcing this Congress to do what it

should have done long ago, and that is to exercise our constitutional

responsibility to decide where and when young Americans will be called

upon to place their lives at risk to defend this country.

I would like to remind my colleagues that despite much of the

rhetoric against the President of the United States, it was the United

States Senate on March 23 that voted to authorize air strikes against

the former Yugoslavia. I must admit that the President, following up on

that, has put me in a very strange situation. After all, just in

December I voted to impeach President Clinton, but the majority of the

United States Senate decided otherwise.

The question now is, do I face the reality that young Americans are

at war, or do I do what is politically expedient and ignore that?

When I was a young State Senator, I once questioned a former

Congressman by the name of Charles Griffin, who served during the

Vietnam War. I remember asking him how he could serve for those years

while Americans were coming home every day and, in effect, pretending

there was not a war going on? I want to apologize to Congressman

Griffin because basically I am seeing the same thing today. But in

deference to now deceased Congressman Griffin, I certainly will not do

what I accused him of doing.

I am going to vote to declare war. Americans are at war. I find

myself at a horrible reluctance to do this, but the bottom line is

Slobodan Milosevic has initiated four wars. As we speak, he is killing

innocent men and women. And, yes, American credibility is at risk.

The question we have to ask ourselves is what are the unintended

consequences of this Congress failing to act? Do we signal to North

Korea, who it is anticipated will drop 600,000 rounds on the American

positions the very first day of that war, that as a Nation we say one

thing and do another when it becomes slightly politically inconvenient

for the 535 Members of Congress?

I say this with great reluctance, because I know that in voting for

war I share the responsibility for the lives of those young Americans

who may die. But to do nothing is much worse. We are in this situation.

We cannot choose to ignore it. And I think that the best course of

action for this Nation is to use the overwhelming military might that

we have at our disposal to end this war quickly, swiftly and with a

decisive American victory.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard on two or three occasions this morning that

the operation in Kosovo will come at the expense of the Social Security

trust fund. I find it ironic that many of the people who made that

statement just a few weeks ago were advocates of massive tax cuts for

hundreds of billions of dollars which they assured the American people

would not come at the expense of the Social Security trust fund. Either

it is or it is not. And we do have to set priorities.

I do agree with the gentleman from California (Mr. Hunter) that

equipping our troops, that we have as a Nation already sent into this

combat, is a higher priority than anything else at the moment.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New York (Mr.

King).

Mr. Speaker, of the many books that have

been written about the failed American policy in Vietnam I think one of

the most damning was a book called ``Dereliction of Duty.'' It talks

about how the generals and admirals who comprised the Joint Chiefs of

Staff during the early Vietnam years knew that President Johnson was

intentionally lying to the American public about his plan, or lack of a

plan, in Vietnam, that there was no plan to win the war, there was no

plan as to how to win the war, and yet not one of these people who

claimed to be looking out for their troops was willing to step forward

and risk their career by saying, ``Mr. President, do it right, or do

not do it at all. If you are not willing to do it right, I will resign

my commission and go out and tell the American people the truth about

what is going on.''

Mr. Speaker, this Congress is doing the exact same thing. This

Congress is criticizing the American President for the way he is

handling this conflict. Yet the American President says he will not

introduce ground forces, and the Congress that is damning him today by

250 votes said, ``Do not introduce ground forces.''

We have a President who says, ``I am not going to stop the bombing.''

We have a Congress, 250-plus votes, said, ``Do not stop the bombing.''

We share in the responsibility for what is happening right now.

Tonight, brave young Americans will get in F-15s, F-16s, A-6s, and they

will put their lives on the line in what is for them a very real war.

One cannot wish it away. We just voted not to end it. The choice we

have is to do it right or to repeat the mistakes of the Congresses and

the Presidents during Vietnam and to pretend that some half-hearted

policy is going to achieve American objectives, and to look the other

way as the casualties mount because we are not willing to put our necks

out, we are not willing to risk our careers, but we are going to let

those kids risk their lives.

Think about it. This is our constitutional obligation. The vote to

get the kids out failed. That leaves but one other alternative, and

that is to do it right for the sake of those kids who are putting their

lives on the line right now.

Now, if we want to revoke the last vote, if we have changed our

minds, then vote it. But if we are going to ask those kids to make the

ultimate sacrifice, then we as a Nation ought to commit this Nation to

the effort and not just a handful of pilots.