Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the gentleman

from Pennsylvania and the gentlewoman from Florida for bringing this

measure forward, and commending them for the care by which they have

drawn their language and the willingness that they have to listen to

people, to respond to people, and to amend the language to meet the

concerns of so many people. Indeed, I would take exception to the

previous speaker in that regard. I think they have done a very good job

and the language is very clear and precise.

What is the problem here? The problem is we really want to reaffirm

our partnership relationship with the administration along the lines of

what the President has already, with so many of us, made as a

commitment, and we want to reverse something of what has been the

discouraging history of this.

The President first began working and talking with NATO on this and

made a commitment to NATO. After first saying to NATO we would

participate in an air war and we would participate in peacekeeping

troops on the ground and having made an agreement with various allied

nations in NATO, he then came to Congress and said, ``Will the Congress

endorse or reject this? But, if you reject that, understand it hurts

our relationship with NATO.'' Well, perhaps he should have talked to us

before NATO.

Then later on he says, ``Well, we will threaten the air campaign.''

He agrees with NATO, and then comes to us to confirm or reject. Again,

perhaps we should have been consulted first. Now when we begin the

bombing, they have already made the commitment with NATO, and then he

asks us to reject or accept.

With our troops committed to the field we are facing a fait accompli,

where any measure, any statement we make, can be misconstrued as

failure to support our troops in the field, misconstrued by Milosevic

as a failure of will on the American people, misconstrued by NATO as an

unwillingness of this Congress to support this President's ability to

make agreements with NATO.

We want to change that cycle. We want to say, Mr. President, your

relationship between the executive branch in this government and the

Congress of the United States, the legislative branch of this

government, comes before your relationship with allied nations; that in

order to have a unified American government presence on any position we

should take, Mr. President, we should come to agreement within this

great government first. Then when we make an agreement with our NATO

allies, there can be no doubt about it that we are in agreement.

If Mr. Milosevic should ever see American troops on the ground, he

should have no doubt that that has been the product of a unified

decision between the presidency and the Congress prior to those troops

being present on that soil. In that case, he can have no doubt that we

mean business.

But let us not put our young men and women, those brave young men and

women that accept this responsibility and put their lives at risk, in

the position where they are on the ground, under fire, and the

President is consulting with the Congress of the United States after

the fact of their being in harm's way.

Let us make this relationship very clear. If you put on the uniform

of this great land, if you are willing to risk your life, if you allow

your son or daughter to be at risk and take on the horrible, fearful

worries that families accept, let the families of America know that

these young brave people will not be made as people in a theater of

open conflict without first the prior unified agreement between the

legislative branch and the executive branch of this government.

Congress and the President together can make a commitment to those

troops to define a mission and equip them to complete that mission at

the highest possible degree of effectiveness with the lowest

conceivable level of personal threat. We can do this if we do it

together, Mr. President. We cannot do that for these brave young men

and women if you act first and consult with us later. Let us straighten

out the cycle.