Mr. Speaker, I stand before you in opposition to this

resolution. Once again, it champions a dismally irresponsible and

dangerous course of action. Setting a date certain for withdrawal of

our troops from Iraq would envelope Iraq in a cloud of chaos and self

destruction and expose us to a heightened threat of terrorism at home.

It ignores the President's plan for success in totality. It makes no

consideration for the effort to make progress on diplomatic and

economic fronts--essential components for that success to occur. They

offer no solutions in this bill, only criticism.

Mr. Hoyer's failed attempt on April 19th to correlate my involvement

regarding the U.S. efforts in Bosnia in the 1990s to that of the

situation in Iraq today stretches into the realm of absurdity. However,

what was clear from that debate was that Mr. Hoyer at the time, as well

as Mr. Murtha, agreed that we should not tie the hands of our President

in military operations, even in operations that the Congress did not

approve.

Mr. Speaker, let me refresh everyone's memories of that debate which

took place in this Chamber, a debate in which I was the lead sponsor of

three significant resolutions or amendments that set the course of this

Congress--all three which passed by significant margins with support

from both sides of the aisle.

But before I begin let me remind the Nation that there are

significant differences and some similarities between the debate of

Bosnia and today in Iraq. First, Congress did not authorize the

President to use force in Bosnia. Congress did authorize the President

to use military force in Iraq. Second, we did not begin the conflict in

Bosnia, but we did in Iraq. Third, the Republican majority in Congress

did in fact try to work with President Clinton to find a solution.

Former Senator Bob Dole and I with others traveled with President

Clinton to Bosnia and worked with him to set benchmarks for the civil

implementation of the Dayton Accords. I did not assign a date certain

to define success for each benchmark, this would have been folly. At

the time the leaders of the peace were once leaders during the war and

they focused more on these differences than that which brought them

together as a nation. President Clinton did a very good job focusing

the Bosnian leaders to accomplish the benchmarks and move to resolve

their differences and build their new nation.

Last week on the House Floor my colleague, Steny Hoyer attempted to

re-write the history of my involvement, claiming that I supported a

date certain for withdrawal of our troops from Bosnia and therefore I

should do the same with our forces in Iraq. The two contexts are

dissimilar. Let me set the record straight.

On October 30, 1995, the House agreed to House Resolution 247, a bill

that I sponsored with my Democrat colleague, Paul McHale of

Pennsylvania, by a vote of 315 to 103. Representatives Hoyer, Murtha,

and Pelosi voted ``no,'' Mr. Skelton voted ``yes.'' The bill stated

that there should not be a presumption that the United States Armed

Forces would be deployed to enforce a peace agreement that resulted

from the negotiations regarding the conflict in the Republic of Bosnia

and Herzegovina.

In early December 1995, the Dayton Accords concluded, laying a basis

for the path to peace in Bosnia.

On December 13, 1995, I sponsored House Resolution 302 with Ike

Skelton, a bipartisan bill that passed the House by a vote of 287 to

141. Representatives Hoyer, Murtha, and Pelosi voted ``no.'' That bill

reiterated the serious concerns and opposition to the President's

policy that would result in the deployment of 20,000 members of the

U.S. Armed Forces on the ground in the territory of the Republic of

Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Despite the expressed will of the House, President Clinton chose to

proceed with the deployment of those members of the Armed Forces to

enforce the Dayton peace agreement in Bosnia. H.R. 302 declared the

policy of the House was that the President should rely on the judgment

of the commanders of U.S. forces on the ground on all matters affecting

safety, support, and well being of U.S. forces. Congress also declared

to furnish the resources to support the needs of President and the

Secretary of Defense.

Also on December 13, 1995, the President expressed to Congress that

the military mission in Bosnia would be accomplished in 1 year, and our

troops would be pulled out no later than December 1996. No one believed

that the goal could be accomplished within 1 year. A date certain does

not define success, the mission does.

However, despite that assertion, in November 1996, without the

consent of Congress, President Clinton announced that the timeline was

slipping and that our troops would not be withdrawn until June 1998.

By that point, the United States Armed Forces had acted quickly to

achieve their military objectives in Bosnia. In short order, the

courage, dedication, and professionalism of those personnel resulted in

a significant mitigation of the violence and suffering in that region.

However, the implementation of the civil infrastructure--the

humanitarian support, the establishment of a judicial system and a

validated police force--all of the fundamental parts that help make a

society function had stalled and there was no definitive plan to remedy

the situation.

In response, on June 24, 1997, I offered an amendment to the National

Defense Authorization Act of 1998 that passed the House by a vote of

278 to 148. Representatives Hoyer, Murtha, and Pelosi voted ``no'',

Skelton voted ``yes.'' That amendment would have cut funding to U.S.

military operations in Bosnia after June 30, 1998--a date set by the

President. I did not set the date Mr. Hoyer, this was President

Clinton's date. This amendment was later incorporated into the

conference report that included provisions that would allow U.S. forces

to remain if the President made certain certifications and accomplished

certain benchmarks. While I used the date certain given to us by the

President, I made it clear that I supported benchmarks that set the

conditions for a withdrawal of U.S. forces after the mission had been

successfully completed.

President Clinton had set an arbitrary date without articulating a

comprehensive plan--he did not identify the conditions to be met into

order to trigger a troop withdrawal from Bosnia. He simply set a date,

and then revised that date. We in Congress took that date, and required

certain benchmarks to be met, while at the same time allowing the

President the flexibility to allow troops to remain if he thought it

was in the interests of U.S. national security.

In Bosnia, we worked in a bipartisan manner with the President to set

the conditions for success in Bosnia and gave the President maximum

flexibility. Today, this President gets no such deference or

flexibility from the Democrat majority. Mr. Hoyer and Mr. Murtha want

to enforce a date certain for this President. They do not want to work

with this President to set the conditions for success. They simply want

to trigger a date for withdrawal, before the mission is done.

It is ironic that Mr. Hoyer and Mr. Murtha voted against that

amendment--they did not want to set a date certain for withdrawal and

tie the hands of their President. They wanted to give him the latitude

that he needed to insure that the mission in Bosnia met with success;

to re-establish civility, an effective government, a validated police

force and civil infrastructure. Today, their position is the opposite.

President Bush is not setting a date certain as President Clinton had

done.

Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer and Mr. Murtha all are seeking

to tie the hands of this President. They want to cut off funds to our

forces who are only doing what this Congress has asked them to do.

Congress should not tie the hands of the President with a date

certain for withdrawal from Iraq. Unlike President Clinton with Bosnia,

President Bush had the approval of Congress to go into Iraq. He has

given us a plan, conditions that must be met before we start to bring

our troops home. Yet, Mr. Hoyer and his party want to set an arbitrary

date, a date certain for withdrawal that does not correspond to those

conditions whatsoever--cut off funding for our troops who seek only to

succeed in their mission. This is defeatist strategy.

We need to help establish a stable Iraq before we withdrawal our

forces--the provisions in this bill do not allow us that flexibility

and the price that we will pay is chaos in Iraq and further exposure to

terror here at home.

The majority leader of the Senate, Harry Reid talks about polling

data from Senator Schumer that indicate ``political'' gains by their

party on Iraq. It is unfortunate that the Democrat majority think of

Iraq in terms of political points, not national security. If we do not

resolve this issue with immediacy, the readiness of our troops will be

compromised. They are struggling to determine how they will

redistribute funds to pay for their operations while we are here

politicking. We must stop the defeatist strategy of the majority now--

the one by which they hope to gain political capital from to the

detriment of our troops in the field.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time and move the

previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.