Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member

for the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to House Resolution 157 and the

underlying resolution.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation is engaged in a Global War on Terror, a war

that we did not seek, but a war that was brought to our shores on

September 11, 2001. Today, we fight an enemy without borders that is

determined to destroy our Nation by any means necessary. An al Qaeda

leader said that they have the right to ``kill 4 million Americans, 2

million of them children, and to exile twice as many and wound and

cripple thousands.''

The President of Iran has called a world without America and Israel

``possible and feasible.''

It is also undeniable that Iraq is the central front on the war on

terror. But you don't have to take my word for it, Mr. Speaker. The

terrorists themselves have told us it is so. Al Qaeda's deputy leader

has repeatedly said that Afghanistan and Iraq are the ``two most

crucial fields'' in the Islamists' war. In a letter he said that

expelling Americans from Iraq is the first step in expanding the jihad

wave.

If this, Mr. Speaker, is what the terrorists are telling us, why

should we not believe them?

As much as I wish that our troops were home, I recognize that

arbitrary pulling out of Iraq would provide a sanctuary for terrorists

and have serious consequences for our U.S. security. A self-sustaining

government there is critical to our security here.

I share the frustration of all Americans who had hoped that the

Iraqis would be protecting and governing themselves by now, but that

simply is not the reality. Previous strategies to stabilize Iraq have

not succeeded and things cannot continue as they have been. In order to

succeed, Iraqis must step up and take responsibility for their own

security. And under the new strategy, Mr. Speaker, announced last

month, they will be held more accountable in the future.

Some say this new strategy is wrong; yet they fail to say what is

right. They call for an arbitrary pullout yet have not answered the question ``what

then?'' They seek to cut off funding for our troops yet offer no plan

for fighting terrorists.

Mr. Speaker, there is no easy answer. But simply declaring that we

don't wish to be at war anymore does not make our enemies surrender.

Withholding military personnel, failing to provide funds for our

troops, or pulling out of Iraq with no plan to win the war on terror

are simply not options. The consequence of failure is simply too dire.

If we are defeated, Iraq will become a haven that our enemies will use

to launch attacks against us. The Middle East will remain destabilized.

Terrorists will fight us on our soil. And it will send a dangerous

signal to countries like Iran, North Korea, and Syria, and embolden

terrorists around the world.

The Baker-Hamilton Commission warned specifically against a

precipitous withdrawal. They said: ``The near-term results would be a

significant power vacuum, greater human suffering, regional

destabilization, and a threat to the global economy. Al Qaeda would

depict our withdrawal as a historic victory.''

So our challenge, Mr. Speaker, is to insist on victory and not accept

defeat. So, accordingly, I will not vote to deny our troops the support

they need to protect themselves and America.

The nonbinding resolution before us today is contradictory on

supporting the troops. On the first page it says we will continue to

support the troops in Iraq, but on the next page it expresses

opposition to sending reinforcements that our military says are needed

to support our troops currently on the ground.

Mr. Speaker, how can you support the troops but not the mission?

Let me say again that I will not vote to deny our troops the support

they need to protect themselves and America. What I would vote for, if

given the opportunity, is a plan that would have the force of law, that

would set benchmarks to measure progress, that would ensure that

funding for our troops is not cut off, and that would keep Congress

fully apprised so that they can make informed decisions.

In closing, I would just say that we must not forget the sacrifice

that our troops are making. They are fighting the enemy abroad so that

we will not have to fight them here. The bottom line is that this is

about America and our security and a set of enemies who have said again

and again that their goal is to destroy us.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to oppose this closed rule and

the underlying resolution.