Mr. Speaker, today as we debate this resolution, I am more

convinced than ever that our country's leadership in removing Saddam

Hussein from power was both morally and strategically right. Saddam

Hussein left no choice but for us to act. He systematically violated 17

separate U.N. Security Council resolutions. The U.N. chose not to act.

He tried to conceal from the international community his desire to

produce weapons of mass destruction.

In November of 1999, our Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, said

that Saddam Hussein has chosen to spend his money on weapons of mass

destruction and palaces for his cronies. No doubt David Kay was correct

when he called Saddam a gathering threat during a recent congressional

hearing. If you do not believe Mr. Kay, maybe we should ask the

families of the thousands of Kurds Saddam gassed in 1988 or ask the

first U.N. weapons inspectors who prior to 1998 revealed the presence

of anthrax, mustard gas, VX nerve gas, chemical weapons casings, and

bombs filled with germ agents. These weapons remain unaccounted for

today.

Saddam Hussein's regime's support of numerous other terror

organizations is well documented. Iraq stoked terrorism and instigated

violence in Palestinian territories by paying the families of suicide

bombers $25,000 for attacking innocent civilians.

Iraq harbored the notorious Abu Nidal, whose terror organization

carried out more dozens of terrorist attacks in 20 countries that

killed and injured nearly 900 people including many Americans.

Iraq harbored Abu Abbas who was responsible for the Achille Lauro.

Iraq also incorporated the MEK terrorist organization into its own

military and security forces.

Since Saddam's fall, Libya voluntarily opened its weapons program to

inspectors. Pakistan is now taking overdue action to reign in its

nuclear proliferators. And very importantly, the emergence of a

pluralist and democratic Iraq is forcing the region to undertake

democratic and social reforms which will enhance stability throughout

the Middle East.

Iraq has a bright future. Not every day is a bright day, but every

day moves closer to constitutional government and democracy. On March

8, the governing council approved an interim constitution. Took us a

lot longer to do that in our country. A sovereign government will

assume authority for Iraq, we hope, later this year, later this summer

even.

There is plenty of work left to be done. But I think as we move this

resolution today, we appropriately commend those who led this fight,

the Iraqi people, for their incredible courage and optimism in the face

of unspeakable horrors, and the proud men and women who serve us in the

United States Armed Forces.

For the reasons I just mentioned, along with many other reasons, I

voted with the vast majority of my colleagues in 1998 in favor of the

Iraq Liberation Act, which made it the policy of the Untied States that

Saddam Hussein should be removed from power. And I commend the

President for his leadership in taking action on this policy.

And, Mr. Speaker, as a result of this action, there is no question

that the United States and the world are safer. Decisive coalition

action against this brutal dictator and his WMD programs has

demonstrated our resolve. To name a few specific examples: First, in

the weeks and months after the war, Colonel Gadhafi's regime in Libya

voluntarily opened up its weapons program to inspectors after

considering the cost of defying the United States and its partners in

the war on terrorism; second, Pakistan is now taking overdue action to

rein in its nuclear proliferators and, as a result, the network of

illicit WMD suppliers is becoming more clear; last, Mr. Speaker, and

this is very important, the emergence of a pluralist and democratic

Iraq is forcing regional autocrats to undertake much-needed democratic

and social reforms, which will lead to greater stability in a

tumultuous region.

For the first time in their lives, Iraqis will be guaranteed a free

and fair election process, a Bill of Rights, and an independent

judiciary; ideals which we here in America take for granted. All

Iraqis, most notably Iraqi women, now have freedoms and rights they

could have only dreamed of after a generation spent under Saddam's

reign of terror. And more than 200,000 Iraqis have been trained and

equipped by coalition forces to provide for the security, not the

repression, of the Iraqi people.

To be sure, there is plenty of work left to be done in Iraq. A

society of terror and repression does not transform into a free and

stable democracy overnight. But we must have faith in the Iraqi people.

Early in our own Nation's history, regional and racial schisms

threatened to tear the United States apart. Although the parallel is

not perfect, many of Iraq's challenges today resemble those of early

America as Iraq struggles to secure peaceful borders, build

institutions, and draft a working democratic constitution in the face

of great odds.

The United States and the new Iraqi government must be strong allies

in the war against terror, the effort to halt the proliferation of

WMDs, and the ongoing struggles to bring fundamental human rights to

all people. No other modern nation's people understand the need for

these efforts like the people of Iraq. The normalization of relations

with Iraq will provide us with opportunities to work closely

with our Iraqi friends. I urge my colleagues to meet and work with Rend

Rahim, the Representative to the United States from the Iraqi Governing

Council, and who under the new sovereign government will become Iraqi

Ambassador to the United States. Representative Rahim left Baghdad as a

young woman in the 1970s. In 1991 she founded the Iraq Foundation and

has become well-known as a passionate advocate for democracy in her

homeland. In her new role she will work tirelessly toward fostering and

maintaining the relationship between the United States and a free and

democratic Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, we must be prepared to stay the course in Iraq, to

overcome the terrorists and Ba'athists who fear democratic principles,

and to put forth the necessary resources to demonstrate to the Iraqis

and to the world that the United States will always remain committed to

a free and secure Iraq. I commend the President and our coalition

allies for their leadership in deposing Saddam Hussein, a brutal

dictator who procured and employed weapons of mass destruction,

repressed and tortured his people, and actively encouraged global

terrorists with financial rewards. I commend the Iraqi people for their

incredible courage and prevailing optimism in the face of horrors you

and I cannot imagine. And I commend the proud men and women of the

United States armed forces, who have proven once again that when called

upon in defense of freedom, their effectiveness is unmatched anywhere

in the world.