Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman from

Pennsylvania (Mr. Murtha), the ranking member on the Committee on

Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense for yielding. I thank him and

commend him for his extraordinary leadership and support of our troops.

When the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Murtha) speaks, we listen.

And that is why I will be joining him in opposition to this resolution

this evening.

Mr. Speaker, before I enter into my reasons why, I want to call to

the attention of our colleagues a section of the San Francisco

Chronicle that was published this Sunday: ``Portraits of Sacrifice.''

It has the face, the name, and the date of sacrifice of the 556 members

of the U.S. Armed Forces as of last Thursday who had lost their lives

in Iraq since the war began almost a year ago. Of course, sadly, since

last Thursday, indeed, since last Sunday, that number has grown.

Mr. Speaker, I will include for the Record these names and dates of

sacrifice and home towns.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in a moment of silence to

honor the memory, the sacrifice, and the patriotism of these brave

American troops.

Mr. Speaker, every one of us who serves in this body supports our

troops. There is no question about that. We appreciate their valor,

their patriotism, again, the sacrifice that they are willing to make

for our country. When I have had the privilege of visiting them before

the initiation of hostilities with the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr.

Murtha) last year in Qatar, Turkey, and Kuwait, we promised those

troops that they would have whatever they needed, that regardless of

what we were on the resolution of going into the war, once we went into

the war, once the President made that decision, we were one team, one

fight.

And that is why it is so sad that today with this resolution to

support the troops that we cannot be one team, one fight. Why was it so

difficult for the Republicans to reach across the aisle, say to our

troops that we could have come together as one team, one fight, in

support of our troops?

Mr. Speaker, it is sad to say that more than 415 of our troops have

died, over 415 of the 560-some have died since the President declared

in early May the end of major combat with a sign saying ``Mission

Accomplished'' behind him.

Perhaps some of those deaths could have been avoided if our troops

had the equipment and the actionable intelligence to protect them, the

force protection that they needed. But they did not.

I visited Iraq with the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. Skelton), the

senior Democrat on the Committee on Armed Services, and, similar to the

visit with the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Murtha), the troops

greeted him with great appreciation for his service to our country.

Again, we promised them the equipment that they needed. And it is

only recently, maybe just this week, that the troops have the Kevlar in

their lining, in their flak jackets that they need. It has taken that

long. And it would not have happened without the gentleman from

Pennsylvania's (Mr. Murtha) insistence when the $87 billion request

came to the floor, the second request for Iraq, that did not have the

request for that equipment in it.

We all agree that our military conducted itself with great

excellence. It performed its duties in a way that is worthy of

commendation. However, the civilian preparation was not so good. Do not

take my word for it. Take the word of General Zinni, who said the level

of sacrifice of our troops was not met with the level of preparation

for post-war Iraq.

Over 400 of our troops have died in the post-war phase.

This resolution that we have before us today is interesting in what

it lacks. It lacks the recognition of the challenge that we face in

Iraq. It is clearly an indication that the Republicans are in severe

denial about Iraq. They are in denial as to why we went into Iraq, they

are in denial as to what the conditions are that exist in Iraq right

now, and they are denying in this resolution what our troops and those

who have served in Iraq need.

There is such inconsistency this day that I must spend my time on

this floor to point it out. There is so much I want to say about this

resolution and about statements that have been made in this debate. But

what I want to focus on are some of the inconsistencies of the

Republicans. Because

while we have been debating here what would be the best resolution,

bringing us together, of course, we do not have that opportunity, while

the Republicans are proposing this resolution on the floor, they are

dishonoring the troops in the Committee on the Budget. They are

dishonoring the troops in the Committee on the Budget.

The Bush budget shortchanges American veterans. When he tells our

brave troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan in the State of the Union

address that he will, quote, ``give you the resources you need,'' but

then does not budget for them, his credibility gap grows and so does my

colleagues'.

This budget refuses to end the disabled veterans tax. It does not end

the survivors' benefit tax. It proposes new increases in the cost of

veterans health care. This is what is going on on Capitol Hill today

while we have this meager resolution to support the troops on the

floor. It fails to provide meaningful investments in veterans' health

care. The list goes on and on.

And the severe blow was that the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Edwards),

the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Military Construction,

offered a resolution to add $1.3 billion for veterans' health. And that

was defeated along party lines. That would have been a way to honor our

troops. Yes, indeed, it would have.

When I say that this resolution is in denial about why we went into

the war, of course it mentions nothing about weapons of mass

destruction, but it does mention that Saddam Hussein drained the Arab

marsh, causing an ecological disaster. Did my colleagues realize that

that was the reason that we went to war, the same folks who have rolled

back 30 years of bipartisan environmental progress are declaring a

cause of war, the draining of the marsh in Iraq? It was a terrible

environmental disaster.

Nobody spoke about it at the time, but there is another swamp that

must be drained and that is right here in Washington, DC, the swamp of

special interest money, the swamp that says special interest money

calls for giving tax cuts to people making over $1 million, not having

$1 million, making over $1 million a year, give them that tax cut but

do not provide for our troops and do not provide for our veterans. At

the same time, we are giving money to Halliburton, who is ripping off

the taxpayer while feeding the troops with overcharges.

Yes, there is a swamp that needs to be drained. It is right here in

Washington, DC, and that would not be an environmental disaster.

Mr. Speaker, we did have an opportunity and we requested of the

Committee on Rules that we be able to present a Democratic resolution.

In fact, we had hoped it would be a bipartisan resolution, and it drew

upon the expertise of so many; the leadership, the patriotism, the

intellect, the integrity of so many of our Members.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Murtha) and the gentleman from

Missouri (Mr. Skelton), of course, called for us immediately to offer

our condolences to the families of those who were killed in Iraq. That

would have been a valuable addition to this resolution. It insisted

that we give the troops the body armor, all of them, and the armored

vehicles they need to keep them safe. Some of that has come to fruition

because of the gentleman from Pennsylvania's (Mr. Murtha) work. Much of

it is still not accomplished.

Under the gentlewoman from California's (Ms. Harman) leadership, we

had in our resolution to immediately remedy the deficiencies in the

intelligence on which our troops rely. Force protection saves lives. As

a 10-year member of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, I

value that. It should be part of what we are advancing.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. Murtha) insisted that we

honestly account for the cost of ongoing military operations in Iraq.

The gentleman from California (Mr. Lantos) insisted that we assemble

a true international coalition to accomplish our mission.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. Edwards) and the gentleman from

Missouri (Mr. Skelton) demanded that we eliminate disparities in pay

between our active duty military and the National Guard and reservists.

We had that opportunity today, but you rejected it.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. Edwards) again insisted that we provide

for the health care and benefits our wounded servicemen and -women

earned for when they come home.

Why could we not have come to the floor with a bipartisan resolution?

Why could we not have been one team, one fight? I do not understand it.

We all take our responsibility to provide for the common defense very,

very seriously. The clear and present danger facing our country is

terrorism. Our military and our Intelligence Community serve our

country well. They protect us with their lives. We must support them

with our actions, as well as our words.

Our military, we pledged to leave no soldier behind on the

battlefield. We must leave no soldier or any veteran behind in our

budget. Only then will we honor them in a manner worthy of their

sacrifice.

The material I referred to previously I will insert in the Record at

this point.

Mr. Speaker, the distinguished gentleman, Chairman of the

Committee on Armed Services, is respected by all of us here. I thank

him for his service to our country.

Would the gentleman inform the Members of this body when all of the

troops had the body armor? As of when?

Starting this anniversary?

As of when? As of when?

As of when? As of when?

But when did every troop have it? As of when?

The gentleman knows that they only had it as a matter of

weeks, and they would not have had it without the gentleman from

Pennsylvania's (Mr. Murtha) help.