Mr. President, the question is: What is our duty? We know

what the duty of our soldiers will be when they raise their hand and

take an oath to serve our country. They agree to risk their lives for

America. They follow orders. They follow the lead of their commanders.

They march into battle. Some come home and some do not. But what is the

duty of the Congress? What is our responsibility when it comes to war?

First, of course, was the authorization for the use of force.

President Bush came to us and said, I want to have the authority to

invade Iraq for three reasons: No. 1, to get rid of the dictator Saddam

Hussein; No. 2, to destroy weapons of mass destruction; and No. 3, to

make sure the country lives up to the requirements of the United

Nations resolutions.

Many of us felt at the time that America was being misled about the

real danger in Iraq. Some of us, some 23 Senators, voted against the

authorization of force back in October of 2002. But as we take a look

at that scene in Iraq today, we realize that all three of those things

have been accomplished. Saddam Hussein no longer exists, weapons of

mass destruction never existed, and there is no question about

complying with the United Nations resolutions.

So the obvious question is: By what authority is America still there?

By what authority do 150,000 Americans now risk their lives while we

stand in the safety of this Chamber?

This resolution seeks to define our mission today in realistic terms.

If the President had come to Congress 4 years ago and said, I want the

authority to send American troops into the middle of a civil war in

Iraq, a war that has been brewing for 14 centuries between warring

Islamic factions; I want American soldiers on the street risking their

lives every day until the Iraqis resolve this age-old dispute, do you

think we would have approved that authorization of the use of American

force? Of course not. It would have been pure folly.

Sadly, the situation today has no clear mission, and that is the

reason for this resolution. This resolution makes it clear the Iraq

Study Group, Democrats and Republicans, men and women who served our

country so well in public service, would have a chance to step forward

and come up with a plan that makes sense for America to start coming

home, and that is what this resolution says.

Who wants America to come home at this point? The

American people do. The Iraqi people want us to leave. In fact, the

Iraqi leadership has said it is time for us to start withdrawing our

troops. The resistance to bringing our troops home comes from the other

side of the aisle and from the White House. They believe we need more

troops.

How often will America respond when the Iraqis pick up the phone and

dial 9-1-1 to send another 20,000 of our best and bravest to go into

battle? It is time for the Iraqis to stand and defend their own

country. It is time for the American forces to start to come home. It

is time for us to acknowledge that they have done their job and done it

well. We have lost almost 3,200 American lives; 24,000 have been

injured. We know among those injured many have not been greeted as they

should have been. They have been sent to flophouse rooms at Walter

Reed's Building 18. They have been pushed through the bureaucracy of

the Veterans' Administration. For those who say they support our

troops, they will have a chance to prove it soon, as we start trying to

put the resources we need into the military and VA, to help our troops

as they return.

This resolution is an opportunity for this Congress to speak to the

reality of what is going on in Iraq today, and the reality suggests

that it is time for American forces to start to come home; not more

forces in harm's way but more forces coming home to be greeted by us,

as Americans, for the fine job they have done. We cannot blame them if

the mission has been lost over the last 4 years. They had nothing to do

with that. But we can make it clear that our future mission is going to

be one we can define precisely: to stop terrorism, to train the Iraqis

so they can defend themselves, and to protect our own troops. Those are

clear missions.

For those who resist this resolution, the obvious question is this:

What do you think our mission is today? Is it simply to send more and

more troops into harm's way, that they would risk their lives? I think

not.

For those who argue that we are micromanaging the war, I guess my

question for them is, isn't it time that somebody managed this war?

Isn't it time, when it came to troops and mission and equipment, that

we clearly had a management plan that our troops deserve?

For those who argue that we are cutting off funding, they have not

read the resolution. We are not cutting a penny from the troops and the

money that they need to come home safely. But we are saying that our

mission has to be clear and our troops have to come home.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support what the

American people want, the redeployment of our fine troops back to

America.