I thank the gentlelady.

Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues in expressing my deepest

appreciation and gratitude to the men and women of our Armed Forces, to

the families of those who have died, who have been wounded or are

presently in harm's way.

My prayers and all of my efforts as a United States Congressman are

devoted to ensuring the well-being and support of our military, as they

fight to protect our Nation, to honoring their memories, and to helping

them when they return to our country.

Mr. Speaker, after we deposed Saddam Hussein and removed him from

power, it became clear to most Americans and most people around the

world that so much of what our President had told us about Iraq was not

true. There were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Saddam had no

intention of sending Iraqi agents to slaughter Americans on our shores,

and Saddam had precious little, if any, contact with foreign terrorists

or anyone else who wanted to do harm to America.

Mr. Speaker, now after nearly 4 years and the death of more than

3,100 American servicemen and -women, after more than 23,000 American

men and women have been wounded, and after the United States has spent

almost one-half a trillion U.S. taxpayer dollars in Iraq, I believe we

have met our moral obligation to the people of Iraq.

We have given the Iraqi people an opportunity over nearly 4 years to

decide whether they will live together with themselves in peace,

neighbor to neighbor, Iraqi, Sunni, Shia and Kurd.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, the Iraqi people have not yet decided they

want to live together with one another in Iraq in peace.

Our having our United States brave young men and women standing

there, being shot at, being blown up is not encouraging the Iraqis to

live together in peace. Not only are our troops dying and being

wounded, but 80 percent of the Iraqi people say they want us to leave

their country immediately.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush implies that al Qaeda will take over Iraq

if we leave. In my opinion that is nonsense. Today, you have less than

1,500 al Qaeda in Iraq. Iraq has a population of 25 million people.

Today, you have not only Iraqi Shiites killing al Qaeda Sunnis, you

have Iraqi Sunnis killing al Qaeda Sunnis. They don't like foreigners

in Iraq, whether they be Sunnis, and especially if they are al Qaeda or

Americans.

Mr. Speaker, the only hope that our enemies have to destroy the

United States is to have us remain bogged down in the swamp of the

Iraqi civil war. Are we smart enough to pull ourselves out of that

swamp of the Iraqi civil war? Or are we going to continue to allow our

Nation to have our soldiers bled, our resources taken away,

our equipment destroyed, taking our attention away from the other

military threats and realities in this very hostile world?

I believe that the United States' vital national interests will only

be served if we withdraw all of our troops out of Iraq as quickly as

possible for the safety of our troops being uppermost in our minds.

Then we can leave several thousand in the region just in case. We can,

more importantly, encourage the regional players, through diplomacy, to

come together to help the Iraqis decide to live in peace.

Mr. Speaker, leaving Iraq's civil war will serve America's vital

national interests by allowing us to rebuild what is now a depleted

U.S. Army and U.S. Marines, a military that is not fully up to its

strategic requirements to deal with all the possible threats in the

world.

We need to refocus on Afghanistan and the resurgence of the Taliban.

We need to be prepared militarily for the potential threats from North

Korea, Iran and, yes, even the People's Republic of China.

It is also important that we take these resources that we have been

spending in Iraq not only to rebuild our military but to spend the

money here at home. There is al Qaeda in 60 Nations in the world. They

have pledged to come to America and harm us; yet we have spent more

money in Iraq since 9/11 than we have spent on our homeland security

needs.

Believe it or not, Mr. Speaker, that is the truth and that has to

change.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting for this resolution. Iran and Syria and

Saudi Arabia have an interest in stabilizing Iraq. They will not permit

the destruction of that country. They are afraid of refugees coming

into their countries and destabilizing their Nation.

We need to vote for this resolution and withdraw from Iraq.