Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join the overwhelming

majority of American people, the Congress and many top U.S. military

commanders to voice my opposition to President Bush's ill-conceived

plan to send more American troops into the middle of an ongoing civil

war in Iraq. The President's plan, which has been attempted before on

four separate occasions and failed, is simultaneously too little and

too much. 21,500 troops is too little to make a difference in a city of

6 million who are unwilling to see beyond their sectarian differences,

and too much burden to place on an American military already stretched

to the breaking point.

Mr. Speaker, in October 2002, I voted in favor of the legislation to

allow President Bush to defend the national security of our country

against the stated threats posed by Saddam Hussein. In large part, I

based my decision on the information I learned in several classified

briefings with high-level administration officials about the

capabilities of the Iraqis to deliver weapons of mass destruction to

the United States.

These officials pointed to an imminent threat posed by Saddam Hussein

and his potential use of unmanned aerial vehicles to deliver weapons of

mass destruction to our shores. Of course, we now know that these

weapons, as well as the Bush administration's claims regarding Saddam's

ties to al Qaeda, were fictional. The consequences of our action,

however, are quite real.

To date, the Iraq war has come at a terrible cost to the United

States. More than 3,100 service members have been killed and greater

than 23,400 have been wounded. My home State of Pennsylvania has lost

149 soldiers and over 1,000 have been wounded. Moreover, the United

States has spent almost $380 billion to date, with hundreds of billions

of dollars more requested by the Bush administration.

The war in Iraq has also diverted much-needed resources away from

fighting the war on terrorism and eradicating al Qaeda. The focus on

Iraq and away from the real threat of al Qaeda has resulted in an

increasing number of deadly attacks launched by Taliban and al Qaeda

forces in and around Afghanistan.

On Tuesday, The Washington Post reported that NATO's top commander,

General John Craddock, does not have enough forces for the anticipated

spring offensive by the Taliban. The general warned that ``failure to

send reinforcements was weakening the mission and jeopardizing the

lives of soldiers fighting'' in Afghanistan.

More than 135,000 troops are currently serving in Iraq. Many have

completed their second or even their third tour of duty. Multiple tours

of duty for the National Guard and Reserve members have created

hardships for many families in my district and throughout the United

States. Currently, these brave American forces are caught in the middle

of a religious dispute that began in the 7th century between rival

Muslim factions. These underlying sectarian hostilities have come to

the fore in Iraq and have grown into a full-blown civil war.

Bringing stability to Iraq cannot be achieved through an escalation

of our military involvement in that country. Rather, Shiites and Sunnis

must decide for themselves to forge a political solution to this crisis

in which the interests of all Iraqis are represented. Nevertheless,

President Bush is ignoring the advice of his top generals, the

bipartisan Iraq Study Group, the majority of Congress, and, most of

all, the American people by announcing his intention to send an

additional 21,500 American troops into harm's way to continue pursuing

a flawed policy.

Mr. Speaker, I oppose this escalation of our troop presence in Iraq.

The time for more troops was 4 years ago when General Shinseki

presciently warned of the need for hundreds of thousands of military

personnel to stabilize post-war Iraq. But the President, the Vice

President, and the former Secretary of Defense believed they could

fight this war on the cheap, with too few troops, too little armor, and

too little help. They were wrong, and now it is too late.

Mr. Speaker, from my perspective, the resolution before us today has

been long overdue. The American people have called on this Congress to

express their disapproval of this war of choice in Iraq and this

President's prosecution of it. To that end, I will support this

resolution and urge my colleagues to do the same.