Mr. Speaker, I would like to establish a ground rule

for all my colleagues, and that is, regardless of how you vote on this

resolution, no one will question your patriotism. If we can just start

with that benchmark, I think we will have a higher degree of debate and

in good faith.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution is about duty and responsibility, the

duty and responsibility that Congress owes to our men and women in

uniform. Our first duty is to make wise and educated choices in

identifying a threat, the necessity of action and the legitimacy of the

goal before committing or continuing to commit more of our troops to

the war.

When considering this resolution, which reflects that an escalation

of the war is unwarranted and is not in the best interests of our

Nation and our troops, each of us must ask one fundamental question: Is

escalating and continuing the war in Iraq worth fighting and dying for?

Because that, in the final analysis, is what we decide. We seek an

answer to this question, but we must be ever mindful that the courage

and bravery of our troops is never questioned. Our soldiers' valor and

commitment are not diminished by the errors in judgment made by their

civilian leaders. The question is whether the mission in Iraq is worth

their sacrifice. As we move forward with this decision, we must

recognize the lessons of history, or we are doomed to repeat its grave

mistakes.

For example, ``The public has been led into a trap from which it will

be hard to escape with dignity and honor. They have been tricked into

it by a steady withholding of information. The Baghdad communiques are

belated, insincere, and incomplete. Things have been far worse than we

have been told, our administration more bloody and inefficient than any

that public knows. We are, today, not far from a disaster.''

Now, the parallels are uncanny, and you are wondering who may have

said that. The quote was 86 years ago, and it was a communication from

T.E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, in August of 1920,

from Baghdad.

Continuing. ``The situation in Iraq is grave and deteriorating. In

addition, there is significant underreporting of violence in Iraq. The

standard for recording attacks acts as a filter to keep events out of

reports and databases.'' More Lawrence of Arabia? More 1920? No. 2006,

the Iraq Study Group report.

Let me continue. 1992, General Colin Powell. ``The Gulf War was a

limited objective war. If it had not been, we would be ruling Baghdad

today, at unpardonable expense in terms of money, lives lost, and

regional relationships.''

Now, a year earlier there was an observation, ``Once you got Baghdad,

it's not clear what you do with it. It's not clear what kind of

government you would put in place of the one that is there now, Saddam

Hussein. Is it going to be a Shia regime, a Sunni regime, or a Kurdish

regime? Or one that tilts towards the Baathists, or one that tilts

towards the Islamic fundamentalists? How much credibility is that

government going to have if it is set up by the United States military

when it is there? How long does the United States military have to stay

to protect the people that sign on for that government? And what

happens to it once you leave?'' That was 1991, spoken by then-Secretary

of Defense and current Vice President of the United States, Dick

Cheney.

We remain a good and great Nation, but we have done all the good in

Iraq that we are going to do. An escalation only delays the day that

the Iraqis assume the responsibility of setting aside their sectarian

differences and embrace the promise of democracy that we have delivered

to them. We cannot do this for them, whether we send in 20,000 or

200,000 more troops. And we cannot ignore the lessons of history, the

views of military experts and the will of the American people.

It is time for our troops to start coming home. And it is time for

the Iraqis to start building a home. Vote ``yes'' on this resolution.