I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 63,

which opposes the President's plan to escalate the war in Iraq. I do so

because I am in total agreement with Generals Casey and Abizaid, who

have said that what is needed in Iraq is a political solution and not a

military one, and that additional troops are not recommended.

I have had a chance to travel to Iraq five times now, and based on my

own observations in places like Fallujah and Tikrit and Al Qaim out on

the Syrian border, I firmly believe that it is the Iraqi people who

must ultimately decide whether they are committed to building a better

life for their children through democracy, or whether they are more

committed to an all-or-nothing sectarian conflict between Sunni and

Shia.

Madam Speaker, I believe that packing more troops into the narrow

streets of Baghdad would be a disaster. As our daily briefings

indicate, the dominant conflict now on the ground in Iraq is no longer

Coalition forces against al Qaeda and supporters of the Baathist

regime. As the daily body counts of tortured and executed Iraqis

indicate, the prevailing conflict on the ground in Iraq now is a brutal

civil war between the Sunni and Shia militias, with our troops in the

middle.

In fact, in a recent hearing here in Washington, it was entitled,

``Iraq: What Will it Take to Achieve National Reconciliation?''

Basically, as this hearing pointed out, the key mission that we have

given to our troops is to somehow now reconcile the differences between

Sunni and Shia in Iraq. Just to be clear on this, Madam Speaker, the

Sunni and Shia have been in frequent conflict since the year 632 A.D.,

following the death of the prophet Mohammed. That is what we have asked

our troops to do, in essence, to convince the Iraqis now to stop

killing each other and to embrace democracy instead.

The President has now asked our brave sons and daughters to take up a

police action or essentially a civil affairs action, going door to door

in Baghdad. The mission in Iraq has changed.

I have to wonder, how many votes would the President and Vice

President have gotten initially if they had been honest and said, We

want to send our sons and/or daughters to Iraq in order to reconcile

the differences between the Sunni and the Shia who have been fighting

for almost 1,400 years. Not many, I think. But that is where we now

find ourselves and our troops. While the mission in Iraq has changed,

the President is staying the course. What's more, he has decided to

push even harder in the wrong direction.

Now is the time that the American people have fairly asked, What will

Congress do? Many of my colleagues believe that this resolution doesn't

go far enough; and in honesty, I tend to agree with that assessment.

But I do believe that this resolution presents a solid and meaningful

step in the right direction.

There will be a further debate in coming weeks on the funding on how

to best protect our troops while transitioning to Iraqi control in

Iraq, and we will have more opportunity to do that.

Lastly, I would like to address the argument that the continuing war

in Iraq is necessary for fighting the global war on terrorism. As I

have said before, I have been to Iraq five times now. One of the

questions that I have repeatedly asked our people on the ground is, How

much of this fight in Iraq is part of the global war on terror? How

much of it is involving foreign fighters in al Qaeda? Unanimously, they

have recommended that it is about 10 percent of the fight in Iraq.

So 90 percent of our cost, 90 percent of our sacrifice, is in a

matter that has nothing to do with the global war on terror. In fact,

the Defense Department now says that the Mahdi Army, the main Shia

militia, has replaced al Qaeda as the most dangerous force in the

increasing violence there.

If we are truly committed to the global war on terror, I might point

out we have a situation in southeast Afghanistan and in Waziristan,

where the

Taliban, who actually did support al Qaeda and who actually did involve

themselves in the attacks on September 11, are building support.

While we spend $350 billion in Iraq, Pakistan has meanwhile allowed a

safe haven to be established for the Taliban. If we are indeed

committed to protecting America and the global war on terror, I would

suggest that there are smarter and better ways to do that.

Yes, the American people are waiting for this Congress to take a

stand. It is time to step up. I ask my colleagues to support this

resolution. It is the first step in eventually bringing the troops home

safely