Madam Speaker, I am proud to be yielded time

from a true American hero.

If at any time while I am in the Congress and I am asked to vote to

authorize war, I will ask myself two fundamental questions, two caveats

to such action. Number one, what are the United States' vital

interests? How are our vital interests being advanced? Number two, what

is the mission and how is the mission being defined?

I was not in the Congress when the vote to give the President the

authority to go to war in Iraq was taken, but as I remember the debate

during that vote, it was heavily predicated on the fact that we thought

that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, and the mission

seemed to be principally defined as finding WMDs. It is clear that he

had them at one time because he used them on his own people.

However, since we have gone into Iraq, whether it is because they

have transited the country or they were destroyed, or whatever the

reason, we have not found them.

Then the mission was defined as toppling the oppressor, the butcher

of Baghdad, Saddam Hussein. And we have done so. We let the Iraqi

courts exercise their due diligence in a court of law, and he is dead

now. Good riddance, and hanging was too good for him.

Then we defined the mission as providing a stable framework that

would allow the Iraqis to build a democracy because we can all agree

that having a democracy in an Arab country in the Middle East would be

optimal for the entire world. They have had their elections. They have

adopted a Constitution, and they have elected leadership that is in

place.

Again, I ask about the United States' vital interests and how we are

defining the mission because, Madam Speaker, the mission needs to be

understood. It is important that those of us in Congress can understand

it, of course. It is important that the American people can understand

it. But most importantly, the brave men and women who wear the uniform

and are in theater risking their lives and their limbs need to be able

to understand the mission.

President Bush has said that the mission is to achieve stability in

Iraq, to train the Iraqi forces so that they will be able to stand up

so that we will be able to stand down. He says that the so-called surge

is a necessary thing to do.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I have listened to the

testimony from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense as

well, about how this surge will work, and in my mind, a surge is a

quick, overwhelming show of force. However, as it has been explained to

me, this action will have two of a total of five brigades begin to

deploy to Baghdad and the Anbar province and then gradually the other

three brigades will be deployed as an assessment can be made on how the

first two are doing.

I will note that I have read that General Schoomaker, Army Chief of

Staff, has said in a closed door hearing that he thought the surge had

a 50-50 chance of success.

Madam Speaker, our troops have done everything that we have asked

them to do and more, and you cannot blame America for the Iraqis'

failure to stop killing one another in a religious frenzy.

I am a product of the Vietnam era. My husband was an Air Force pilot

in Vietnam. My county has the largest chapter of Vietnam veterans in

the entire Nation, and although I have resisted making any analogy from

Iraq to Vietnam, I will make this one personal observation.

From the very beginning of the Iraq conflict, we should have allowed

our troops to go in and use overwhelming force; but we were told, no,

that we had enough. Those that suggested otherwise were dismissed, and

so they micromanaged from the White House, and now I think they are

doing the same with this surge. Our troops can win, but they are being

held back. They are being micromanaged by our politicians. We are not

letting them win, and this is the lesson that I learned from Vietnam.

In Vietnam, we used a graduated response. We held back our troops. We

did not use overwhelming force, and after many died, we left the field

and I cannot believe in my lifetime that once again we are repeating

this mistake.

I support the troops and I support victory. I recognize how

incredibly complex this situation is. I recognize that having our

troops leave will probably result in a loss of human life that will be

horrifying. I recognize that leaving will probably encourage the

neighbors to move in to protect their own interests, and I recognize

that the war on terror will follow us if we leave.

Yet, recognizing all of this, since the Iraqis will, for whatever

reason, not stand up to ensure their own freedom, how can we ask

Americans and for how long to continue to do so for them? Either use

overwhelming force to win, or get out and do not continue to ask our

troops to fight with one hand behind their backs.

Mistakes have been made, as they always are in war; but another

lesson that I learned from Vietnam is that the only thing worse than

micromanaging a war from the White House is micromanaging it from here

in Congress. And this is a time when every Member in this House needs

to dig down deep and vote their conscience, knowing that sending the

right message to the administration has the very real consequence of

sending the wrong message to the troops who so bravely and

professionally fight for freedom and liberty and democracy.

Vote ``no'' on this resolution.