Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of

this resolution which is a clear and concise response on behalf of the

majority of Americans who share our opposition to the President's

misguided plan to escalate the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq.

We can all agree upon and indeed must take this opportunity once

again to affirm that our support for the brave men and women of the

United States Armed Forces is steadfast and unyielding.

As this resolution declares, our first priority must continue to be

protecting the brave men and women in uniform who have served this

Nation honorably and valiantly. The decision to invade Iraq is the

single most devastating and misguided foreign policy decision our

Nation has ever made, and the process of protecting our Nation from

compounding this tragic error must begin this week under new leadership

with a clear vision and a plan that finally acknowledges that we can no

longer stay the course in Iraq.

After nearly 4 years of war, the sacrifice of more than 3,100 brave

servicemen and -women, tens of thousands more injured, and over $600

billion spent on the war to date, President Bush's ``mission

accomplished'' declaration certainly rings hollow.

We must not forget whose war and misguided strategy failed us, and we

must ask who the President is listening to beyond the small circle of

advisers who were the architects of this fiasco in the first place.

The only strategy this administration has proposed is to stay the

course, augmented by four earlier surges, along with the most recent

plan to deploy the additional 21,500 U.S. troops, likely to escalate

further to 40,000 to 60,000 more troops before the year's end. This

latest policy is stay the course writ large.

The President's plan operates under the assumption that somehow,

despite

all the evidence to the contrary, there is a military path to success

if only more forces are on the ground. Not only is this logic flawed,

it flies in the face of the wisdom of his top generals in the field,

such as the former commander of the U.S. Central Command, John Abizaid,

who told the Senate Armed Services Committee that ``more American

troops right now is not the solution to the problem.''

I agree. We cannot afford to inject more of America's best and

bravest into the chaos, particularly without the armor and training to

protect them. Shortchanging our heroes in the face of a relentless

insurgency is unworthy of this Nation. If we can't supply our troops

with what they need, how can we possibly contemplate an escalation?

Without a reduction to the violence against U.S. troops, without

stability in the region, and without evidence of a correlation between

the raging violence and the number of U.S. troops and the number of

trained Iraqi troops, now is the time to reduce the U.S. combat

presence in Iraq, not expand it.

The Republican mantra has been that the Democrats don't have a plan

for Iraq other than cut and run, an assertion that is simply false. We

do have a comprehensive plan for Iraq that includes implementing the

recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, a regional conference to

engage Iraq's neighbors diplomatically, and seeking political solutions

to the escalating turmoil in the region. But again I would ask, what

evidence is there to suggest that this President will listen to

anyone's plan other than his own?

This is simply not an insurgency that needs to be crushed. Confirmed

by the President's most recent National Intelligence Estimate, Iraq is

in a state of civil war, and thus political solutions are needed to

address the real problem. Although al Qaeda remains active in Iraq,

they have been surpassed by ethnic violence, the primary source of

conflict and the most immediate threat to stability in Iraq.

Proponents of the war claim that those opposed to the surge aren't

supporting the troops. I would ask them how we are supporting our

troops while keeping them in a country where 70 percent of Iraqis

believe it is acceptable to attack U.S. troops, where 78 percent

believe that our troops provoke more violence than they prevent, where

three-quarters of them would feel safer if American forces left Iraq.

By staying the course in Iraq, we are putting our troops in a

situation that has no positive outcome. Aren't the lives of our troops

more valuable than saving political face and trying to prove a point?

And while it is well known that the claims of weapons of mass

destruction were based on faulty intelligence and there was no

connection between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda, why are we committing

our troops and resources towards refereeing a civil war in Iraq,

thereby diverting resources required to win the global war on terror

rather than fighting al Qaeda in Afghanistan, tracking down Osama bin

Laden, and preventing another terrorist attack against America?

The President's earlier NIE made it very clear last September that

the war in Iraq has become a primary recruitment vehicle for violent

Islamic extremists, motivating a global jihadist movement and a new

generation of potential terrorists around the world whose numbers may

be increasing faster than the United States and our allies can reduce

the threat.

Opposition to this surge does not mean a lack of support for our

troops; rather, it affirms what the American people made clear last

November, that our policy in Iraq is not working and that we need a new

direction. I will vote for this resolution, and I will continue to join

with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to bring our involvement in

this misguided tragedy to an end

The NIE also indicates that, rather than contributing to eventual

victory in the global counter-terrorism struggle, the situation in Iraq

has diminished America's position, What additional evidence does the

President need to prove that his policies in Iraq are only making

matters worse for Iraqis and making the world decidedly less safe for

America?

And to those who would argue that this resolution sends a signal to

our enemies that we are weak and divided, you are wrong. This debate

proves why democracy works, unites us, makes us stronger, more

resolute, and why these strengths--that our enemies envy and seek to

overcome--will ensure that we ultimately prevail over them.

Opposition to this surge does not mean a lack of support for our

troops. Rather, it affirms what the American people made clear last

November--that our policy in Iraq is not working and we need a new

direction.

I will vote for this resolution, and I will continue to join with

colleagues on both sides of the aisle to bring our involvement in this

misguided tragedy to an end. Voicing opposition to this war, to this

President's policies, and to more of the same is our solemn

responsibility, consistent with the objectives of this resolution, the

hopes of the American people, and the mission of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the Majority leadership and the distinguished

chairmen of the Armed Services and International Relations Committees

for their hard work and making this debate a priority of this Congress.