Thank you, Mr. Engel, for yielding.

Madam Speaker, today with all my colleagues I stand here in support

our brave men and women of the Armed Services, as well as their

families. We should honor their great commitment and sacrifices without

hesitation. I support this resolution because I believe the President's

plan for escalation is the wrong approach to the conflicts in Iraq.

But this must not be the end of our efforts in Congress. For too

long, Congress refused to stand up to the administration. Our actions

today must mark the beginning of Congress' role, not the end. The time

has come to tell President Bush enough is enough.

Last November, the American people spoke. They spoke loudly and

clearly on a number of issues, but none more passionately and

forcefully than the war in Iraq. The American people, long before this

debate this week, decided that the misadventure in Iraq must end.

Our troops have performed valiantly in Iraq. In just a matter of a

few weeks they removed from power a brutal dictator and began to

provide the Iraqi people the opportunity to construct a new political

order. Our troops have also contributed mightily to the reconstruction

and development of the Iraqi economy and infrastructure.

But over the course of this conflict, the mission of our troops has

been transformed, and now they find themselves in the middle of a civil

war that involves not just two sides, but almost innumerable factions

in conflict with one another.

What is worse is the continued presence of American troops in Iraq

will likely only inflame the ongoing sectarian strife and create more,

if not fewer, enemies of America. The bottom line is that a continued

presence of American troops will only exacerbate the multiple conflicts

in Iraq.

As a member of the Readiness Subcommittee of the House Armed Services

Committee, I have additional concerns regarding President Bush's

proposed escalation. I believe such an escalation will further strain

the limited resources available to our military. Already we know our

readiness levels for our troops not yet deployed are inadequate.

A further escalation of troop levels in Iraq will only exacerbate

this problem and put more servicemen and women in harm's way without

the proper training or equipment. Our troops were not trained to be

peacemakers in situations such as today's Iraq. Some have argued that

we need to increase the number of troops, so that we can engage in an

action similar to what our forces did in Bosnia.

Madam Speaker, this is at best a false analogy. Iraq today is not

Bosnia of 1995. Today's Iraq is in the early stages of a series of

conflicts that may indeed intensify, but this will occur irrespective

of whether we insert another 21,500 troops. We simply cannot solve the

sectarian conflicts militarily. While it was the Bush administration

who initiated hostile actions in March of 2003, I believe it is now

necessary for the Iraqi people to step up and assume responsibility for

their future.

What is also needed now more than ever is for this administration to

reach out to our traditional allies and those in the region who have a

significant stake in the future of Iraq. The Bush administration must

do something that it has been woefully reluctant to do. It must admit

that it made a major strategic and foreign policy mistake when it

invaded Iraq in the first place. And I am willing to wager that such an

admission would go a distance towards at least beginning to repair our

relations with the rest of the world, and the improvement of our

relations with our traditional allies beyond the British is a

prerequisite to securing their help on Iraq.

Madam Speaker, I call on my colleagues to support this resolution

today, as the beginning of this Chamber's efforts to protect our troops

and bring our country's involvement in this war to an end.