I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I want to first take this opportunity to express my

heartfelt gratitude and deep respect for our troops and civilians

serving in harm's way. I have had the privilege of visiting our troops

in Iraq on four occasions and Afghanistan twice, and they and their

families are truly the heroes in America.

I rise today in opposition to this resolution, a resolution that

seeks to maintain the status quo, in essence, to stay the course, a

scenario that everyone agrees is unacceptable. This resolution offers

no alternative strategy.

As we consider the challenges in Iraq, we need to remember and learn

from the lessons of Afghanistan. In the 1980s, we supported the people

of Afghanistan in defeating the Soviets, helping throw the Soviets out

of that country. In 1989, when that happened, what did we do? We walked

away. We did not finish the job. We did not help the people of

Afghanistan to stand up a secure and stable government. Instead, we

walked away. Who filled the vacuum? The Taliban, and ultimately al

Qaeda, a safe haven for them to plan attacks against America and its

interests.

In 1989, I imagine that few Americans believed that what went on in

the mountains of Afghanistan would impact the lives of Americans here

at home. On September 11, 2001, in a tragic fashion we learned that

that was the case, that what went on in Afghanistan mattered here at

home. We cannot afford to make the same mistake now in Iraq, to allow

Iraq to become a safe haven for al Qaeda and other enemies of our

Nation and our citizens.

The Iraq Study Group offered a comprehensive approach to the

challenges of Iraq. It included political, diplomatic, and military

options. As part of the military proposal, it dismissed increasing our

troop levels by 100,000 to 200,000 troops, saying it was not feasible

and would lend to the argument of an occupation.

However, the Iraq Study Group did support more limited troop

reinforcements. And I quote from the Iraq Study Group report: ``We

could, however, support a short-term deployment or a surge of American

combat forces to stabilize Baghdad or to speed up the training and

equipping mission if the United States commander in Iraq determined

that such steps would be effective.''

The report goes on to dismiss the idea of an immediate withdrawal.

Well, our commander in Iraq today, General Petraeus, an individual

confirmed unanimously by the United States Senate, is on record

supporting the need for these additional reinforcements.

Ultimately, the key to long-term success in Iraq is the Iraqi people

themselves. They need to show the ability and the will to stand up and

secure their emerging democracy. Having liberated Iraq from a regime of

terror and torture, our role today is to assist the Iraqis in achieving

a stable and secure nation. This reinforcement effort is part of that

effort, along with regional diplomatic efforts and internal Iraqi

political reconciliation efforts. We are now in the role of helping the

Iraqis help themselves. We cannot forget the lessons of Afghanistan and

walk away.

I urge a ``no'' vote