Madam Speaker, I rise today in defense of

our national security, in support of our troops, and in favor of this

resolution.

This measure is a first and important step in preventing the

President's ill-conceived escalation plan; reversing our present,

perilous course; and ultimately bringing our brave troops home from

Iraq.

Mr. President, when in a deep hole, stop digging.

But rather than searching for a way out, the President proposes to

dig down deeper, plunging further into a dark abyss. Blinded by

ideology and steeped in delusion, the administration's answer to the

chaos in Iraq is to send an additional 21,500 troops into the middle of

it.

I do not support the President's shortsighted, wrong-headed, reckless

approach. And on behalf of the American people, this House must act now

to stop the continuation of an ambiguous, constantly changing, open-

ended engagement in Iraq.

During the last 4 years, our men and women in uniform have answered

the call of duty. They have demonstrated true courage and bravery and

honor. They have served our Nation valiantly, even as many civilian

leaders have failed them.

I mourn the loss of 3,100 Americans who died, 95 of whom are from my

home State of Illinois. I pray for the thousands who have been

seriously wounded and permanently disabled. And I have voted again and

again to ensure that our troops in Iraq had the body armor and the

equipment that they need to protect their lives and discharge their

duties.

Tragically, the war in Iraq is a case study in ``mission creep.'' And

the fact is no amount of troops can successfully complete a mission

that is unclear, that is ill-defined, that is muddled and mutable.

During the run-up to the first gulf war, then-Chairman of the Joint

Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, put forth eight criteria to be

met for military action. Among the critical questions posed by the

Powell doctrine were the following: Do we have a clear attainable

objective? Is there a plausible exit strategy to avoid endless

entanglement? Have the consequences of our actions been fully

considered?

The answer to each question when applied to Iraq today is the same as

it has been since the start of this war: no, no, and no.

With the help of its author, the Powell Doctrine was shredded to bits

and the mission in Iraq is adrift.

Consider this: On September 12, 2002, President Bush challenged world

leaders at the U.N. General Assembly session to confront the grave and

gathering danger posed by Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. However,

no weapons of mass destruction were found there.

Then President Bush shifted his justification, arguing that the war

was about liberating Iraqis from a brutal dictator. But in December

2003, 4 years ago, Saddam Hussein was found and captured. He has since

been tried and hanged for crimes against humanity.

After Saddam was taken into custody, President Bush claimed that the

mission was to spread democracy throughout the Middle East. Yet Iraq

has deteriorated into sectarian violence erupting into a bloody civil

war.

Now, with the violence increasing, the President says our mission is

to confront the terrorists in Iraq so we don't have to face them here

at home. However, according to government intelligence, the war in Iraq

has helped recruit more terrorists, not vanquish them.

Madam Speaker, now is not the time to close our eyes, cross our

fingers and stay the course. We cannot continue to engage in the same

action and expect a different result. We should not send more of our

soldiers to the desert on a mission that shifts like the sands beneath

their boots.

The President's plan attempts to impose a half-baked, unworkable

military solution, when Iraq needs a political one. Rather than a

military escalation, this situation in Iraq requires a diplomatic and

political intensification. The American military must stand down, so

the Iraqi people can stand up and seek a political settlement and

assume responsibility for their own future. The Iraqi government must

engage in negotiations and compromises that balance the power of

provincial and central governments, share oil revenues and protect the

rights of every Iraqi citizen.

The Iraq Study Group, co-chaired by James Baker and Lee Hamilton,

released a report in December stating the same. They said the security

situation cannot improve unless leaders act in support of national

reconciliation. There is no action the American military can take by

itself that can bring about success in Iraq.

As Democrats, we support our troops, but we don't support the

Commander in Chief squandering billions of our tax dollars and

recklessly putting our brave soldiers in the cross-hairs of someone

else's civil war. I believe our domestic national security rests on

redeploying our military forces from Iraq in order to build more

consensus in the Middle East.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, I support this resolution opposing

President Bush's failed policy of escalation. It is time to bring a

responsible end to this war, to bring our troops home, and to bring

them home right now.