Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight in support of this

resolution that expresses our unwavering support of our troops and our

opposition to the escalation in Iraq. This is an extremely important

debate and it is one that is long overdue.

We have lost over 3,100 brave Americans. Many more will return home

with mental health and physical wounds that will stay with them for the

rest of their lives.

We have spent hundreds of billions of dollars. Hundreds of thousands

of Iraqis have lost their lives or fled their homes as their country

has fallen into deeper civil war.

Regardless of one's opinion on how we got into Iraq, we are there,

and the situation is deteriorating. So the simple question before us

is, What is the best plan for the future?

The President has called for an escalation of troops; in other words,

more of the same approach.

I oppose an escalation of U.S. troops in Iraq. I will not support

funding for the President's plan or blank checks for an open-ended

commitment.

We need a new plan, and escalation is not what the Iraq Study Group

called for. It is not what our top generals have advised, and it is not

what the American or Iraqi people want. When General John Abizaid,

former top commander in Iraq, asked his commanders in the field if more

U.S. troops would help, the unanimous answer was no. As he said: ``And

the reason is because we want the Iraqis to do more. It's easy for the

Iraqis to rely upon us to do this work. I believe that more American

forces prevent the Iraqis from doing more, from taking more

responsibility for their own future.''

U.S. forces cannot clear and hold neighborhoods in Baghdad

indefinitely. We have tried so-called ``surges'' before, and they have

not stopped the violence. And as with these previous surges, when we

leave, the same problems will return, and perhaps even worse.

The reality is that United States military strength cannot solve the

problems in Iraq nor should it. The future rests on the capability and

the will of the Iraqi people. Our continued dominance only prevents

Iraqis from taking control of their country and their destiny. The

military mission of toppling Saddam Hussein is over. The political

mission, the reconstruction mission, the nation-building that this

administration said it would never do has all but failed.

But that is what we must now address, not our strength of arms but

our strength of diplomacy and our power to rebuild.

Our new strategy should be to withdraw and redeploy our soldiers

quickly while empowering the Iraqi security forces. We can help to

rebuild and create economic opportunity, to train Iraqis and perform

other assistance as asked, but we cannot remain the dominant force in

Iraq.

It is time for Iraqis to take control of their own country. A

stabilized, secure and free Iraq can only be achieved when Iraqis take

full control. Until that time our forces will be stuck in the middle of

an increasingly violent civil war and all the while Afghanistan sliding

back into danger and violence and al Qaeda continues to plot while our

attention is being diverted.

I have spoken with many people in Maine about this war. I have spoken

with current military personnel, many who have served in Iraq, their

families, veterans, and concerned citizens of all political stripes.

Everyone agrees there is no simple solution to the challenges we face

in Iraq and how to solve it.

There is one opinion that is unanimous. We all support our men and

women in uniform. They, like the generations before them, are heroes.

They heard their country's call and they did not hesitate to answer. I

am glad this resolution makes that support clear. We owe it to our

military personnel to provide them with the very best when they are in

harm's way and when they come home.

I have heard from many Vietnam-era veterans who fear that our new

veterans may face many of the hardships that they faced. This cannot

happen. As a member of the Veterans Affairs' Committee, I am committed

to addressing the mental health and physical needs of our returning

heroes, and I know the American people are willing to do that as well.

And as we discuss alternative strategies, it must be clear that we must

do something that fully supports our military personnel.

This resolution is not about politics. This issue should unite all of

us. This is about the future of Iraq, our strategy abroad, and our

welfare for our troops.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. Yes,

that was a quote in a paper from General Abizaid where he said that

they requested no additional troops, and I will try to find that

article for the good gentleman to get it hopefully to him tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman very much. And I will

find that quote, because you know sometimes quotes get misquoted; so I

will get that for the gentleman.