Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this

resolution formalizing this body's resolve to support and protect the

men and women in the United States Armed Forces in Iraq and

disapproving of President Bush's decision to deploy 20,000+ additional

combat troops to Iraq.

Like the overwhelming majority of my colleagues in the House and

Senate, in 2002 I voted to authorize the use of force in Iraq should

the President deem such force necessary.

Since then, the men and women of our Armed Services have carried out

their mission with great courage and bravery, and they successfully

achieved every military objective we set forth.

They removed a tyrannical, oppressive dictator who brutally

slaughtered his own people, including innocent women and children.

They rebuilt schools and replaced a crumbling infrastructure.

And they provided security for the Iraqi people to successfully

conduct interim elections, to write a new constitution, and to

democratically elect and install new national leadership.

The remaining objectives articulated at the outset--conflict

resolution between Sunnis and Shiites and national peace and

stabilization--can only be achieved for the Iraqis, by the Iraqis.

Their success will take personal will and political compromise from all

domestic parties involved.

Mr. Speaker, success in Iraq today requires a political solution, not

a military one. Twenty thousand more armed American men and women on

the ground in Iraq will not change the determination or alter the

strategy of the warring factions and militants our troops now face.

The addition of more American forces will certainly not encourage the

Iraqi Forces to take responsibility for their nation's security. This

premise never became clearer than when GEN. John Abizaid told the

Senate Armed Services Committee, ``I believe that more American forces

prevent the Iraqis from doing more and from taking more responsibility

for their own future.''

He continued, ``I've met with every divisional commander--General

Casey, the corps commander, General Dempsey--we all talked together.

And I said, `in your professional opinion, if we were to bring in more

American troops now, does it add considerably to our ability to achieve

success in Iraq?' And they all said no.''

Today's U.S. military role in Iraq should be to assist in support and

training initiatives, not to lead the charge. We must remember that

this democracy does not belong to us, but to the Iraqi people who are

responsible for protecting and enhancing it.

If an increase of troops is needed to stabilize specific regions,

those troops ought to be Iraqi troops. At last count there were 325,000

trained, equipped and fielded Iraqi Security Forces. At some point in

time, these Iraqi Forces have to lead security efforts.

What better time than now? What better opportunity could there be for

the Iraqis to manifest their national pride and commitment to democracy

by concrete actions? The Iraqis are ready and the U.S. needs to stop

enabling their dependence.

Recently, the 174th Fighter Wing of the New York Air National Guard

based in my hometown of Syracuse returned from a support tour in Iraq,

and I'm proud that a young member of my staff deployed with them.

Dozens of other young men and women from New York's 25th Congressional

District have fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. I am deeply proud of them

and their remarkable service to our country.

Mr. Speaker, I stand before you as a member of the greatest

deliberative body in the greatest representative democracy in the

world. We are the people's House. We are all elected--chosen--every two

years by citizens across this land to converge here in Washington to

represent them, to vote on their behalf, and to ensure that their

voices are heard in every national debate. And as Members of Congress

we do so with a unique balance of personal belief and public will.

The President is the Commander in Chief. That is a fact. But he is

not the sole decider. We--the other elected leaders of our government--

have a responsibility to express the will of the American people as we

perceive it.

The people of my New York district overwhelmingly supported this

mission at its start, as did I. We still support its goals. We will

always support our troops. But we do not support the continued build up

of U.S. troops in Iraq.

This resolution states the House's disagreement with the President on

this strategy, and I support this 97-word resolution before us. But I

also say today clearly and without equivocation that I will not support

any proposal to cut funding to our troops while they are in harm's way.

America has kept her promises to the people of Iraq. Over 3,000

American soldiers have given their lives to ensure those promises were

kept, and their families now go forward with a constant reminder of the

price of their sacrifice.

This resolution confronts the reality that there are defined military

objectives, defined diplomatic objectives, and defined political

objectives that can only be achieved by a sovereign and selfsustaining

people.

This resolution, ultimately, is about the role and the responsibility

of the Iraqi people. This resolution does not call for us to step out--

American troops there need to remain and take on a different role.

Rather, this resolution calls for Iraq to step up.

For that reason, it has my support.