Madam Speaker, in October of 2002 I worked meticulously

with Members of the Congressional Black Caucus to craft a statement of

principles that has proven to be so absolutely prophetic. Listen to

what our 2002 principle said, and it will put in context why I feel so

strongly that this war has taken us in the wrong direction and why this

resolution is so necessary and worthy of our support.

First principle: ``We oppose a unilateral first strike action by the

United States without a clearly demonstrated and imminent threat of

attack on the United States.''

My colleagues, history will record that the President took first

strike action, and that there was neither a clearly demonstrated nor an

imminent threat of attack on the United States.

Second principle: ``Only Congress has the authority to declare war.''

History will record that Congress delegated that authority to the

President, but I say unapologetically that history will also record

that I voted against that delegation of authority. I never believed

that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction; and, even if it did, I never

believed that they posed any imminent threat to the United States.

Third principle: ``Every conceivable diplomatic option must be

exhausted.''

History will record that our President instead thumbed his nose at

the United Nations and at almost all diplomatic options in his rush to

lead us into this foolhardy war.

Fourth principle: ``A unilateral first strike would undermine the

moral authority of the United States, destabilize the Middle East

region, and undermine the ability of our Nation to address unmet

domestic priorities.''

The passage of time has demonstrated and history will record that

every single one of these concerns was legitimate and warranted.

Fifth principle: ``Any post-strike plan for maintaining stability in

the region would be costly and require a long-term commitment.''

We haven't yet gotten to a level of stability that we are trying to

maintain, but the cost of this war today exceeds $500 billion. That is

costly and with no end in sight. If we continue to follow the

President, the duration of our commitment has no end in sight and no

plan to bring home or redeploy our troops.

Increasing the number of troops in Iraq does not make ending the war

more foreseeable. Past troop increases in Iraq have paraded under

different names than surge, but make no mistake about it, this is not

the first time the United States will have increased troop levels, and

each time they have been met with greater levels of violence.

From December of 2003 to April 2004, the troop increase paraded under

the name ``troop rotation'' and resulted in an increase from 122,000 to

137,000 troops; yet April of 2004 was the second deadliest month for

U.S. forces.

From November 2004 to March 2005, the increase paraded under the name

``improving counterinsurgency operations after the Fallujah

offensive,'' or ``increasing security after January 2005.'' We

increased our troop level to 150,000 troops; the result, no impact on

violence increase. And again, September to December of 2005, we went to

160,000 troops, still no decrease in violence.

In most respects, what the President has proposed is business as

usual, simply under a different name. It did not work before, and there

is no prospect that it will work this time. Madam Speaker, this

resolution is one that we should support and bring our troops home.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Resolution. Simply

stated, as the Resolution says, I support the troops and I oppose the

increase in the number of troops. Simply stated, I support a

redeployment of the rest of our troops from Iraq as soon as possible.

But I can't go forward before I review how we got here in the first

place. Looking back helps me to put a time perspective on this because

this War is now approaching 5 years in duration, a period longer than

the Second World War. And looking back also helps me to put a

substantive perspective on this that I think is absolutely critical to

an understanding of my vote.

It's gut wrenching for me to recall that as early as October 2002--

several months before the President proceeded to war in Iraq and long

before I was later elected to serve the 2-year term that I have now

completed as Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus--I worked

meticulously with every single member of the Congressional Black Caucus

to craft a Statement of Principles that have proven to be so absolutely

prophetic. Listen to what our 2002 Principles said and it will put in

context why I feel so strongly that this War has taken us in the wrong

direction and why this Resolution is so necessary and worthy of

support:

First 2002 Congressional Black Caucus Principle: ``We oppose a

unilateral, first-strike action by the United States without a clearly

demonstrated and imminent threat of attack on the United States.'' My

colleagues, history will record that the President took first strike

action and that there was neither a clearly demonstrated nor an

imminent threat of attack on the United States.

Second Principle: ``Only Congress has the authority to declare war.''

History will record that Congress delegated that authority to the

President, but I say unapologetically that history will also record

that I voted against that delegation of authority. I never believed

that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and--perhaps more

importantly--even if they did, I never believed that they posed any

imminent threat to the United States. Saddam Hussein was a dastardly

tyrant and bully toward his own people, but was a coward and no threat

to the United States.

Third Principle: ``Every conceivable diplomatic option must be

exhausted.'' History will record that our President, instead, thumbed

his nose at the United Nations and at almost all diplomatic options in

his rush to lead us into this foolhardy war.

Fourth Principle: ``A unilateral first strike would undermine the

moral authority of the United States, destabilize the Middle East

region and undermine the ability of our Nation to address unmet

domestic priorities.'' The passage of time has demonstrated and history

will record that every single one of those concerns was legitimate and

warranted.

Fifth Principle: ``Any post-strike plan for maintaining stability in

the region would be costly and require a long-term commitment.'' We

haven't yet gotten to a level of stability that we're trying to

maintain, but the cost of this War to date exceeds $500 billion. That's

``costly'' and with no end in sight. If we continue to follow the

President, the duration of our commitment has no end in sight and no

plan to bring home or redeploy our troops.

Increasing the number of troops in Iraq does not make ending the War

more foreseeable. It will only escalate the number of troops and the

prospects of casualties and will likely only increase the resolve of

the enemy, the same thing that increases in troop levels have done in

the past. Past troop increases in Iraq have paraded under different

names than ``surge''. But, make no mistake about it, this is not the

first time the United States will have increased troop levels. And each

time they have been met with greater violence.

From December of 2003 to April of 2004, the troop increase paraded

under the name ``troop rotation'' and resulted in an increase from

122,000 to 137,000 troops. Yet April of 2004 was the second deadliest

month for U.S. forces.

From November 2004 to March 2005, the increase paraded under the name

``improving counterinsurgency operations after the Fallujah offensive''

or ``increasing security before the January 2005 constitutional

elections'' and increased troops to 150,000. Result: short term

positive impact, but longer term increase in violence and resistance.

Between September and December 2005, troop levels were increased

again, taking the

number up to 160,000, around the constitutional referendum and

parliamentary elections. The referendum and elections proceeded without

major violence, but the increase had little long term impact on

sectarian violence.

In most respects, what the President has proposed is business as

usual, simply under a different name. It did not work before and there

is little prospect that it will work this time.

Madam Speaker, this Resolution is our attempt to make it clear that

we do not support a troop increase or an escalation of this War. I

intend to vote for the Resolution. I just hope the President is

listening.

I am just sick and tired of people telling us that we are

unpatriotic and not supporting of the troops.