Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this resolution.

What this debate is really all about is whether you wish to make a

statement in support of our new strategy in Iraq or whether you oppose

this new plan.

By simply supporting this resolution, you are saying you want to

leave Iraq as soon as possible. I am not willing to do this. I am

willing to support the administration and to give our military and our

troops the benefit of the doubt, and I will vote against this

resolution because I want to give this new strategy a chance, a simple

chance to succeed.

My colleagues, let me repeat. If you vote for this resolution, then

you are saying you do not wish to give the military and General

Petraeus a chance to succeed. In fact, this resolution declares the new

strategy in Iraq is a failure before it has even had a chance to be

implemented.

This is inconsistent with the unanimous vote the Senate gave to the

man selected to carry out this strategy, General Petraeus. Everyone

agrees he is the best man. This resolution is undercutting the general

and our troops at the very time they need our support.

Now, many will argue that there has been ample opportunity to succeed

and that we have failed at this point. Certainly mistakes have been

made and a change of strategy is long overdue. However, what should

this strategy be? Should the U.S. immediately pull out of Iraq, leaving

the terrorists emboldened and potentially put more Americans at risk?

The advocates for this resolution have no answer. In fact, they beg

the very question, What happens when we leave? What happens in Iraq if

we leave precipitously? And what do we do if it turns into a Middle

East conflagration?

If Shiite Iran succeeds in exerting its influence through Shiite

Iraq, it will threaten to spill over the sectarian violence across the

Middle East and elsewhere. Now here is how the head of the Arab League

views this potential conflict. This is what he said. ``If this happens

we will enter hell itself.''

The supporters of the resolution keep talking about the past, but

they do not talk about the future and how we are going to solve this

problem without creating a more serious problem.

Edmund Burke, the great conservative leader from Britain, this is how

he put it: It is not a question of how we got into this situation, but

how do we get out. They have no answers, and by not answering this

latter question they are begging the question.

Now, this is circular reasoning. It is one in which a premise

presupposes the conclusion in some way. In a course of logic, this is

called the core relative. So this resolution is faulty reasoning.

Any professor of logic would simply recognize the false choice. We

need this new strategy that General Petraeus is implementing so that we

can hand over this country to the constitutionally elected government.

My colleagues, this can be done and will be done soon one way or the

other.

Any new strategy must be accompanied by a set of strategic benchmarks

designed to measure progress in Iraq and to hold the administration and

the Iraqi Government accountable for their role in achieving this

success.

Mr. Speaker, I ask to include in the Record a list of these

benchmarks that I recommend be part of this new strategy to allow our

troops to come home.

Why not consider a resolution that incorporates these benchmarks?

But I do offer a warning to the administration. We must have

benchmarks that demonstrate our progress in Iraq. I, for one, and many

others, cannot support continued funding without measurable benchmarks.

And we need to know if we are making progress; and if we are not, then

we can employ other tactics and different measures, all of which will

lead to the Iraqi Government taking on the responsibility for their own

country.

My colleagues, the political easy thing to do is to vote for this

faulty resolution because you are not willing to give a final chance

for success and you have no ideas on achieving success. The harder,

political vote is ``no,'' and that is what I intend to do.

If I have a few more moments, I just want to bring to my colleagues'

attention a quote that has been declassified from bin Laden's deputy.

And if you will bear with me and follow this quote. ``It is my humble

opinion that the jihad in Iraq requires several incremental goals: The

first stage, expel the Americans from Iraq; the second stage, establish

Islamic authority, and then develop it and support it until it achieves

the level of a caliphate; the third stage, extend the jihad wave to the

secular countries neighboring Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Iran; the fourth

stage, it may coincide with what came before, the clash with Israel

because Israel was established only to challenge a new Islamic

entity.''

My colleagues, that is what is at stake. The war in Iraq is a central

front in the global war on terrorism and a central battleground for

Islamic militant extremists in this worldwide mission to simply destroy

all Western democracy. And you don't have to take my word for it. You

can see this declassified deputy to bin Laden, his opinion.

Mr. Speaker, I will vote against this resolution. While no proposal

guarantees success, a precipitous withdrawal of U.S. support would

guarantee failure. The stakes are too high to fail in Iraq. It remains

in America's strategic interests to ensure regional stability in the

Middle East and to deny terrorists a safe haven in Iraq.

Certainly mistakes have been made and a change of strategy is long

overdue. However, what should this change of strategy be? Should the

U.S. immediately pull out of Iraq, leave the terrorists emboldened and

potentially put more Americans at risk? Or do we need a new strategy to

win the war and finish the job? I think the latter.

Instead of a politically motivated resolution, my colleagues and I

have developed a strategy for victory in Iraq. We need to establish

measurable benchmarks for success in Iraq while expressing unwavering

support for our troops.

Any new strategy must be accompanied by a set of strategic benchmarks

designed to measure progress in Iraq and to hold the Bush

administration and the Iraqi Government accountable for their role in

achieving success. Threatening to reduce the future commitment of

American troops and economic aid if they are not implemented, we must

enforce these benchmarks. It is important to stress that an open-ended

American military commitment is both unwise and dangerous. In the

business world, no successful enterprise gives enormous sums of money

without accountability, and nor should we.

The military benchmarks I would like to see utilized include:

Measuring the level of Iraqi government cooperation with the U.S.

Military;

Iraqi progress in removing terrorists and others from its own

security forces;

Identifying the level of combat experience for all Iraqi Army

battalions; and

Tracking the expenditure of funds supporting Iraqi defense forces.

The political benchmarks include:

Advancing a strategy to promote tolerance and co-existence among

Iraqis;

Providing fair access to all Iraqi resources;

Promoting the rule of law;

Reforming the judicial system to ensure equal application of the law;

and

Measuring cooperation and coordination of neighboring countries in

stabilizing Iraq.

Why not consider a resolution that incorporates these benchmarks?

This resolution sends an inappropriate message to our troops. This

resolution declares the new strategy in Iraq a failure before it even

has the chance to be implemented. This is inconsistent with the

unanimous vote the other body gave to the man designated to carry the

strategy out, General Petraeus. Congress is undercutting General

Petraeus and our troops at the very time they need our support.

As cochair of the Congressional Air Force Caucus, I joined in leading

a delegation of members to Iraq. This trip provided valuable insight

into our operations and conditions on the ground. The situation in Iraq

poses multiple problems--Sunni al Qaeda terrorists, committed Baathists

who are largely Sunni, Shiite militias, and Shiite interference from

Iran. This is truly an unholy brew.

The war in Iraq is a central front in the global war on terrorism and

a central battleground for Islamist militant extremists in their

worldwide mission to destroy democracy. But don't take my word for it.

Take the words from a declassified letter from bin Laden's deputy Ayman

al-Zawahiri.

These Islamic extremists view victory in Iraq as paramount to their

establishment of a worldwide Islamic kingdom. Here is what Osama bin

Laden has to say about Iraq from a 2006 audiotape--``The epicenter of

these wars is Baghdad, the seat of the caliphate rule. Their defeat in

Iraq will mean defeat in all their wars and a beginning to the receding

of their Zionist-Crusader tide against us.''

Sectarian violence rages in Iraq, fanned by Iran and Syria, and this

could well spill over throughout the region. Look at these charts. They

show the sectarian divide in Iraq among Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds; and

the other shows the regional divide between Sunnis and Shiites.

If Shiite Iran succeeds in exerting its influence through Shiite

Iraq, it will threaten the spillover of sectarian violence throughout

the Middle East and elsewhere. Here is how Amr Mousa, head of the Arab

League, views this potential Iranian-backed Shiite conflict with the

Sunni nations--``We will enter hell itself.''

The Islamist terrorist threat is real and directly connected to

defeating the insurgents in Iraq. Democrat plans to abandon Iraq will

not make this threat disappear.

America cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the past by

withdrawing from a direct confrontation with radical Islamist

terrorists. They will continue to intensify their attacks against

America, just as they did following other attacks such as in:

1979: 66 American diplomats taken hostage and held in Iran for 444

days.

1983: A truck bomb kills 241 marines at their barracks in Beirut.

1988: Pan Am 103 bombing kills 270, including 189 Americans, over

Lockerbie, Scotland.

1993: Six killed in first World Trade Center bombing by militant

Islamic terrorists.

1996: 19 U.S. service members are killed in Khobar Towers bombing.

1998: 225 people killed in bombings at the U.S. embassies in Tanzania

and Kenya.

2000: Al Qaeda's attack on the destroyer USS. Cole kills 17 American

sailors.

2001: Al Qaeda hijackers fly planes into the World Trade Center and

the Pentagon, while passengers force a fourth to crash in Pennsylvania.

Total number killed: 2,973.

It is vital that we succeed in Iraq for these reasons: A stable Iraq

dedicated to the rule of law will weaken extremism in the Middle East;

we cannot allow terrorists to gain a safe haven in that nation; and

curbing Iran's regional ambitions.

But I do offer a warning. We must have benchmarks that demonstrate

our progress in Iraq. I for one cannot support continued funding

without measurable benchmarks and we need to know if we are making

progress. If we are not, then we can take other tactics and different

measures. All of which will lead to the Iraqi Government taking on the

responsibility for their own country.

In conclusion Mr. Speaker, one thing is for certain: The men and

women fighting in Iraq must never be used as a political tool. They

deserve our unmitigated support. They do not deserve political

posturing. We must continue to provide the troops with the support they

need to be safe and successful. I urge all my colleagues to oppose this

resolution and seek a real resolution that includes military,

political, and social benchmarks for success.