Mr. Speaker, I would just like to mention, logic was

mentioned, and I recall in studying logic, with the square of

opposition, that you

do not do something over and over again and come out with a different

conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the Iraqis are

deciding now to start to defend themselves. I think it is wonderful. I

wish it had happened a number of years ago.

I appreciated having the opportunity to control the time

in the past several hours, and perhaps might request from the chairman

perhaps an additional 2 minutes as I respond and wrap up.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that I listened with great interest to the

George Washington story, and there is no question that there were tough

times. But George Washington had some pretty intelligent advisers. You

know, the people who signed the Declaration of Independence, he had

people like Adams and Washington. You had people like Crispus Attucks,

the first person to die in the Revolutionary War and in the Boston

Massacre on May 4, 1770.

You had people who participated in the Boston Tea Party because they

said taxation without representation is tyranny. It was Christmas Eve

in Pennsylvania when George Washington came across the Delaware and

attacked the Hessian soldiers on Christmas Eve because they were

unaware that this attack was coming. George Washington came from New

Jersey, Morristown, Newark, and went on through and did have a victory.

But let me say the difference, when George Washington was fighting,

there was a clear and present issue. We were fighting for independence.

We knew exactly what it was. We were being held bondage by the British,

that Union Jack.

But what do we have here? We have, following 9/11, support from

practically every country in the world. But then we went on and Osama

bin Laden said he did the bombing, he took credit for it, the World

Trade Center, the Pentagon and the final plane that was brought down on

the way to the Capitol and the White House.

Then we said that we were going into Iraq. First of all, it was

because there were weapons of mass destruction. Then it was the fact

that we had to have a regime change. At one point we talked about we

had to remove Saddam Hussein.

We kept looking for reasons, and that is a big difference. We had the

preemptive strike, and then we tried to come up with the reason that we

were doing it, and it continued to change, one reason after another.

There is a great sense of sadness among those of us who foresaw over

4 years ago the tragedy that is now unfolding in Iraq. On October 8 and

9, 2002, I stood right here in this very well at the House of

Representatives, and I managed the time those 2 days in opposition to

the preemptive first strike for Iraq. It was in the 107th Congress, and

now we are in the 110th Congress, and the war that we assumed would be

swift and certain now continues to rage.

I am looking over the remarks I made at that time. It saddens me that

the argument of those of us who oppose the war fell on deaf ears. At

that time, I stated that a unilateral first strike would undermine the

moral authority of the United States of America. I stated that results

of substantial losses of life will occur, that there will be a

destabilization of the Middle East region and undermine the ability of

our Nation to address unmet domestic priorities.

It saddens me beyond words that 3,122 Americans had to sacrifice

their lives and over 23,000 have been wounded for a war that did not

have to be fought. Included in this number are 50 fatalities from my

home State of New Jersey and 366 wounded. Estimates are up towards

100,000 Iraqi men, women and children have been killed.

After the administration has been proven wrong on every prediction

from the length of the war to weapons of mass destruction to the

strength of the insurgency, we are now being asked to trust their

judgment on a new strategy, which would put 20,000 more American lives

on the line. This plan will not provide lasting security for Iraqis. It

is not what the American people have asked for in November.

Haven't we learned anything from our mistakes yet?

Recent so-called short-term troop surges in Iraq have not stopped the

violence from getting worse. There is nothing to suggest that this time

will be any different.

For example, we had Operation Together Forward from June to October

2006. In June, the Bush administration announced a new plan for

securing Baghdad by increasing the presence of Iraqi security forces.

That plan failed, so in July, the White House announced that additional

American troops would be sent into Baghdad.

By October, a U.S. military spokesman, General William Caldwell,

acknowledged that the operation and troop Increases was a failure and

had not met our overall expectations of sustaining a reduction in the

level of violence. Regardless of how the administration intends to

increase the troops in Iraq, the result will be the same.

There is additional strain on our military personnel and their

families, and personal lives will be upset by unexpectedly early

deployments of family members or unexpected delays in their homecoming.

This is an additional burden to our military families that they should

not have to bear.

By extending operations, we undertake a strategic risk. Our ability

to meet potential future challenges is strained under the current

operational demands. Increasing these demands only increase the risk to

our future capacity.

I had the privilege of serving in the past as a congressional

delegate to the United Nations. I strongly believe in the power of

democracy. If we had allowed the United Nations inspectors to complete

their work before the war instead of suddenly ordering them out of

Iraq, I believe things would have turned out much differently. Instead,

the administration proceeded full speed ahead towards war, as they

disseminated faulty intelligence and relied on scare tactics to garner

support.

I believe the time has come to begin an orderly withdrawal of

American forces from Iraq. This approach would send a message to the

Iraqis that they must take more responsibility for their own security

and would reduce the strain on the American military.

The administration should listen to the Baker-Hamilton commission,

which has offered a stinging assessment of virtually every aspect of

the U.S. venture in Iraq and called for a reshaping of the American

presence and a new Middle East diplomacy initiative to prevent the

country from sliding into anarchy.

I conclude by saying I have heard my colleagues on the other side

warn about Iraq falling into chaos and dangers of the United States

losing our standing in the world. Sadly, Iraq already is in total

chaos, and, unfortunately, the United States, a country we all love,

has suffered much loss and prestige around the world.

In the debate before the war those of us who predicted the outcome

did not prevail. I pledge with my colleagues to listen this time to

vote against escalation of the war and support this resolution.