Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 63, to

stop the President's escalation of our involvement in what has now

become the Iraqi civil war.

I voted no in 2002 when the Congress passed the resolution

authorizing the President to invade Iraq. It was wrong to start this

war then, and it is wrong to escalate it now.

In 2002, I had several basic questions addressed to the President,

questions that are still valid today. I asked then, what is the nature

and urgency of the Iraqi threat to the United States? What is the

mission of our troops? How much international support will we have?

Will this military operation in Iraq decrease terrorism or increase

terrorism? And what is the exit strategy to withdraw our troops from

Iraq?

Mr. Speaker, we now know that Saddam Hussein did not have weapons of

mass destruction. President Bush has since publicly acknowledged that

there was no link or connection between Saddam Hussein and the

terrorist attacks on 9/11.

The mission of our troops seems to change and expand daily, but their

current mission appears to be to act as threatened referees in an

increasingly bloody civil war between the Sunni and Shiite Iraqis.

As for international support, the American taxpayer has borne the

vast majority of the costs to the tune of hundreds of billions of

dollars. American fighting men and women and their families have borne

the vast majority of the deaths and injuries to Coalition troops, over

3,100 Americans killed, 18 from my district, and over 23,000 wounded.

Even our staunchest ally, Great Britain, plans to reduce the number

of its troops in Iraq to 4,500 by this June.

Are we safer today than we were before the invasion of Iraq?

Declassified CIA National Intelligence Estimates indicate that the war

in Iraq has become a primary recruitment vehicle for Islamic

terrorists. Far from being the central front in the war on terror, as

the President and his people say, Iraq is the incubator and training

ground for new terrorists from around the world.

Finally, the President has never clearly stated what is our strategy

to win in Iraq nor what is our exit strategy. ``Mission accomplished,''

``Bring it on,'' ``Stay the course,'' or ``We will stand down as the

Iraqis stand up'' are slogans, not strategies.

Our generals, our diplomats, the Iraq Study Group even the White

House, all agree there is not a military solution to the war in Iraq.

Only a political resolution between the warring Iraqi factions could

end the current violence.

I do not believe that adding more American troops will do anything to

help foster that crucial political solution. In fact, it may hinder it.

Telling the Iraqi leadership and the Iraqi people that they must

solve their own internal problems without limitless American assistance

has a far better chance of success than continuing our current blank-

check policy.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush either did not get or did not understand

the message the American people sent last November. Before the end of

this year, U.S. troops should be redeployed and their efforts focused

on support and training the Iraqi Security Forces. It is their country,

it is their fight, and it is their future.