Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman from

North Carolina for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the Iraq war, one of my foremost

concerns has been the long-term stability of the Middle East, and the

potential impact that chaos in this region could have on our security.

Our men and women in the United States military, among the hundreds

of Delawarians, are doing extraordinary work under very complex and

difficult

circumstances. We owe them an enormous debt of gratitude.

Notwithstanding the heroic efforts of our military personnel, the

Iraqi Government has been unable to overcome the constant instability

and sectarian violence that has marked much of the last 4 years. We

have increased top levels in the past, including Fallujah in 2004, and

Baghdad this past July, with mixed results.

Despite the incredible efforts of our brave solders, it is clear to

me that an increase in American forces alone cannot resolve this

conflict. Therefore, I will support this resolution, because I believe

that the surge will be unsuccessful without a comprehensive diplomatic

strategy to engage the international community and turn the

responsibility over to the Iraqi Government.

That being said, I am disappointed that today's discussion has been

structured in such a way that Members are limited solely to an up-or-

down vote on the troop increases. On Friday, after Congress passes this

resolution, we will still lack the strategy necessary to stabilize the

Middle East and bring our soldiers home.

This Congress owes the American people a truly complete and

comprehensive discourse regarding our future in Iraq. The situation

facing our soldiers is extremely complex, and it is unfortunate that

the Democratic resolution fails to accurately reflect that reality.

In December, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group presented a

comprehensive blueprint to achieve stability in the region and transfer

responsibility over to the Iraqi Government, which I have in my hand

and I went back and reread this week. I would encourage everyone to

reread it.

In my opinion, one of the important recommendations made by the group

was to call for a robust diplomatic effort to stabilize Iraq and ease

tensions in the region. In fact, some of our Nation's greatest military

minds, including former Secretary of State Colin Powell, have joined

the group in recommending that every country with an interest in

averting a chaotic Iraq, including all of Iraq's neighbors, Turkey,

Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran and Syria among them, participate in

this important dialogue.

The group also recommended that we engage the United Nations Security

Council, the European Union and other international institutions in

launching this new diplomatic offensive. The intensive diplomacy

recommended by the Iraq Study Group should be familiar to all of us who

remember the Cold War.

One of the best examples of this approach to diplomacy was evident

when a week after President Reagan asked General Secretary Gorbachev to

``tear down this Wall,'' he sent his administration to Moscow for

diplomatic talks.

The Iraq Study Group's recommendations are by no means a panacea. But

their report does represent a new path forward, based on the pragmatic

style of diplomacy that helped us win the Cold War.

For this reason, I have joined Congressman Frank Wolf and some of my

colleagues in introducing legislation that endorses the Iraq Study

Group's call for an integrated diplomatic initiative. In focusing on a

true strategy for achieving stability in Iraq, this resolution seeks to

improve our global standing and concentrate our efforts on funding an

end game based on a genuine commitment to diplomacy.

To obtain these goals, the Wolf resolution seeks to lift our debate

above the existing political rhetoric and pursue a comprehensive

strategy to build regional and international support for stability in

Iraq.

It is equally crucial that we do everything within our ability to

accelerate the training of Iraqi troops and provide them with the

resources necessary to assume control of their own destiny.

Mr. Speaker, as we speak, thousands of our Nation's bravest and

brightest are risking their lives to serve our country in Iraq.

Protecting American soldiers must continue to be our greatest priority.

I will oppose any attempt to cut off funds for our troops who are

serving in harm's way.

Therefore, it is crucial that we advance constructive strategies,

such as those identified by the Iraq Study Group, to end the violence

and bring our troops home to their families.