Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is a sad day for our

institution, the House of Representatives, and I think it is a sad day

because I sense this debate has very little to do with coming together

as a Nation to face the greatest threat that we have faced since the

Cold War. But instead I sense and I fear it has much to do with

politics as usual.

I have heard speaker after speaker come to the floor to decry faulty

intelligence, to decry how our Nation became involved in Iraq in the

first place. I have heard speakers decry how the war had been

conducted. But, Mr. Speaker, regardless of how we got into Iraq,

regardless of whose war it might have been once, today it is an

American war, and we must accept that fact.

As the people's elected Representatives, certainly we should look at

this new strategy. We need to take an open and honest look at it. And

certainly we are all disappointed that the previous strategy has not

yielded the desired result. But, Mr. Speaker, very, very much hangs in

the balance.

I myself do not know if the new strategy will work. I think it can

work. I hope it will work. And I know it is at least a strategy that

has been recommended by the Iraqi Study Group and our new battlefield

commander, General Petraeus. So until such a time as somebody brings to

me a more compelling strategy or until such a time that somebody

convinces me that somehow the security of my country and the security

of my family is somehow made better off by our immediate withdrawal and

the subsequent implosion of Iraq, I feel we must support the new

strategy. Defeat is not an option.

So what are the options, Mr. Speaker? Clearly many, if not most, of

the Democrats call for withdrawal from Iraq, as do several of my very

respected Republican colleagues. And I respect their views when they

are heartfelt. But, Mr. Speaker, since Democrats now control both

Houses of Congress, why are we not voting on a withdrawal resolution?

And that is one of the reasons this is such a sad day.

I mean, think about it, Mr. Speaker. How do you look a soldier in the

eye and say, You know, I don't believe you can succeed in Iraq. I don't

believe in your mission. I don't believe you can win this war. And I

have the power to bring you home, but I refuse to do it. I refuse to do

it. Where is the courage in that resolution? Where is the conviction in

that resolution? If you truly believe in your heart of hearts that our

soldiers are needlessly risking their lives, don't you have a moral

obligation to bring them home? So with lives hanging in the balance,

with our national security hanging in the balance, we have a nonbinding

politics-as-usual resolution.

Mr. Speaker, it is not really all that easy to figure out exactly

what it is that the Democrats support. But if they don't put forth

their own strategy and yet they want to vote against the new strategy,

that says one and only one thing. It says stay the course. It says

status quo. If you don't have an alternative and you want to vote

against this new strategy, then you are voting to stay the course. The

stakes are too high to stay the course.

Now, we all know that fighting this war is very costly. And like many

Members of this institution, I have met with the mothers of fallen

soldiers. Their burden and sacrifice is solemn and profound. But I

never, never, never want to meet with the mothers whose children may

perish in the next 9/11 if we accept defeat in Iraq. Iraq must be seen

in the larger context of this war with jihadism, with radical Islam.

Whether we like it or not, the battle lines are drawn in Iraq. And

don't take my word for it. Take the jihadists' word for it. Osama bin

Laden has said, ``The epicenter of these wars is Baghdad. Success in

Baghdad will be success for the United States. Failure in Iraq is the

failure of the United States. Their defeat in Iraq will mean defeat in

all their wars.''

Mr. Speaker, we must soberly reflect on the challenge that we face.

Listen to al Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden's number two in command: ``Al

Qaeda has the right to kill 4 million Americans, 2 million of them

children.'' Listen to Hassan Abbassi, Revolutionary Guard's

intelligence adviser to the Iranian President: ``We have a strategy

drawn up for the destruction of Anglo-Saxon civilization.'' Listen to

Iraqi Ayatollah Ahmad Husseini: ``Even if this means using biological,

chemical, and bacterial weapons, we will conquer the world.''

This is the enemy we face, Mr. Speaker, and we face him foremost in

Iraq.

The consequences of failure in Iraq are immense, the beginning of a

Sunni-Shiite genocidal clash as American troop convoys flee the

country. The battle for Baghdad will undoubtedly spill over to the

entire country. Shiites will most likely win. They will draw in Jordan

and Saudi Arabia to the defense of Sunni Iraqis. Iran will rise to the

defense of Shia Iraqis. An entire regional war could easily ensue, and

what is left of Iraq would become a safe haven for the recruitment,

training and financing of radical Islam.