Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman

Skelton for yielding time, and I rise today certainly in support of

this resolution.

I rise also today in support of a strong U.S. military, a military

that is ready to combat terrorists and a military that is ready for the

challenges of this century. And for these reasons, I have to oppose the

President's plan to escalate the war in Iraq and support the resolution

before us.

The President's announcement to add 21,500 U.S. troops to Iraq is a

step in the wrong direction. The American public does not want an

escalation of the Iraq war, especially without an explanation of what

we are trying to achieve. The President promised a new approach, but

more troops does not equal a new way forward.

The United States has a choice. We can stay in Iraq to keep a lid on

Iraq's civil war or we can devote enough time and attention to fighting

terrorists wherever they are and securing a military that is prepared

to protect our national security.

I choose the latter. At a time when we need to manage our strategic

risk in the face of terrorists and nuclear uncertainty, at a time when

our enemies are numerous, unpredictable and dangerous, this

administration has made the wrong choice.

I believe this approach damages our military readiness today and

damages our ability to prepare for threats in the future.

This war has strained our ability to train here at home with

functional equipment. It has strained the ability of our services to

recruit for the future. It has strained our ability to prepare a

defense budget that can prepare us for 21st century threats.

Every State in this Union, including Washington State, has National

Guard units that are depleted. They do not have the equipment that they

need to train and are forced to leave equipment in theater, making it

harder to do their job at home.

In Washington State, 90 percent of the Army National Guard and 65

percent of the Air National Guard have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan

and performed admirably and honorably; but at home, they only have 55

percent of their required equipment on hand, equipment that is integral

to the training of these Guardsmen.

The President's escalation plan will not solve these problems. It

will make them worse. The President's plan will not decrease our

strategic risk. It will exacerbate it.

Units at home are struggling just to meet the training requirements

necessary to deploy to Iraq. With this escalation plan, units at home

will suffer as the Army and Marine Corps are forced to take more of

their equipment to supply the additional brigades going into Iraq,

depleting their training opportunities.

Equipment shortages at home are what we hear about most, but the

war's effect on our prepositioned equipment abroad may be as serious a

threat.

The Army relies on prepositioned sets of equipment in strategic

locations around the world. This equipment ensures that our troops are

able to deploy at a moment's notice. A large portion of this equipment

has been taken to support the troop increase, increasing the chance

that equipment will not be available in the case of an emerging crisis.

I personally have lost confidence in the Iraqi Government to fulfill

its commitments to the United States. I want our women and men in the

military to know that we have a strategy that is worthy of their

individual actions and sacrifice and that they will have the resources

necessary to do their job. But most of all, I am concerned that the

President's decisions have led us away from our greatest national

security threat; that is, fighting terrorists who will do us harm.

Make no mistake, while some of us support this escalation and some of

us oppose it, all of us can agree on the need to support our women and

men in the military, honor their commitment, and make sure they get the

resources they need to do their jobs.

I recently heard from a friend of mine who, I will conclude with

this, who served in the Army Reserve in Iraq and likely will return.

This is what he said.

``Here I am, socially and culturally aware of the greater world. I am

educated and a father of two beautiful children, children who have not

been touched by war or tragedy. People tell me I should get out of the

military because I have done my part, I don't need to serve again; but

I do because if not me, then whom? I serve as an instrument of the

State because I believe in the institution which is the Army and in

turn with what that institution supports. As an officer, I have a duty

to provide leadership to those under my command, and if it means I give

my life at the expense of my children and all the things I love and

hold so dear in life, then that is what I will have to do. I do not

seek this action blindly. I am cognizant of the dangers inherent in

soldiering and understand the risks and rewards involved. As a soldier,

I will always pray for peace, but in a time of war, I am willing to

move towards the sounds of the guns. I will fight for the Army and I

will fight for my country, but most importantly, I will fight so others

will not have to experience the mental anguish and soul-crushing

reality which is war. For in the end, I know that I can love the Army

all I want, but the Army and this country will never love me back, no

matter what the sacrifice. I am at peace with this dichotomy.''

We owe my friend and his brothers-in-arms the training and equipment

he deserves, and we owe him a national strategy that honors our

military and our safety. That is why I ask everyone to vote for H. Con.

Res. 63 to show that this escalation is a step in the wrong direction.