Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 5 1/2 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I speak today with a heavy heart. I am deeply saddened

as I take the floor this afternoon; saddened because we find ourselves

embroiled in a conflict in Iraq, a conflict that is involved with

insurgents that we failed to acknowledge or recognize, a conflict that

is overlaid by sectarian violence between the Shiite Muslims on the one

hand and Sunni Muslims on the other.

Mr. Speaker, this is a great American tragedy. The mission of this

Congress is to urge the change of course.

We are here today because of a series of irretrievable strategic

mistakes. Let's understand the goal of this resolution: number one, to

fully extend our support to those in the uniform of the United States.

I have been on the Armed Services Committee now throughout the years,

and more recently as its chairman, and I cannot tell you how proud I am

of those who are in uniform, whether they be deployed in the Middle

East or somewhere else in the globe or here in our country. We must let

them know, and this resolution does let them know, that we fully

support them, as well as their wonderful families.

The second part of this resolution deals with the Presidential

decision to increase our troops by 21,500. However, it is not clear

what support troops are needed. The Pentagon says 2,500 support troops.

The Congressional Budget Office says 13,000 minimum. But whatever it

is, we find ourselves not seeing a change in strategy, as was promised

by the administration and the White House, but just another tactic that

had been used before, an increase in troops. No more, no less. We are

here to say that is not a good idea.

The series of irretrievable mistakes is a serious list: the skewed

intelligence we received from the Defense Department Office of Special

Plans; the postwar phase of conflict that did not have sufficient

planning; not enough troops, as pointed out by General Eric Shinseki,

the former Army Chief of Staff; allowing the uncontrolled looting and

the breakdown of law early on after the occupation began; the dismissal

of the Iraqi Army, rather than giving them a paycheck and a shovel or

having them do security work that is important to the stability of that

country; the deBathification, that put so many thousands of Iraqis out

of business, out of work, including thousands of school teachers. The

administration has consistently refused to adjust its overall strategy.

I take no pleasure in this, but it is a moment of ``I told you so.''

On September 4, 2002, and again on March 18, 2003, I sent letters to

the White House

predicting some of the deadly outcomes we are experiencing today, and I

warned against a jagged ending to the conflict. While there is a

peacefully elected Iraqi Government, it is a government so divided

along sectarian lines it has not been able to accomplish even the most

basic steps needed for national reconciliation. And now we have the

President's plan for a troop increase, which is a tactic that we do not

approve.

The President's plan will embroil our troops even more deeply into

the sectarian conflict. Put together hastily, it is insufficient as a

requirement for success. Forty percent of all of the Army equipment of

our country is either in Afghanistan or Iraq. The readiness of our

troops is in peril. We are stretching the Army and the Marine Corps to

the breaking point. That is where we are, and basically it is because

of the conflict in Iraq.

Today is an opportunity for us to express our support for the troops

and to say it is not a good idea to increase the troop level in Iraq

because it has been tried unsuccessfully before.

I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I find it rather interesting, Mr. Speaker, that those who oppose this

simple, straightforward resolution tend to confuse a permissive war

with a necessary war. The goals of the insurgents in Iraq are far

different from the terrorists that had their genesis in Afghanistan.

Let us not be confused between the two conflicts or their origins or

those against whom we fight.

Mr. Speaker, once again my friends on the other side of

the aisle are attempting to confuse the conflict in Iraq with the war

against terrorists and has their genesis in Afghanistan, trying to put

it all in one basket. That is not the case. Anybody can have their own

opinion, but, Mr. Speaker, they may not have their own facts.

Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may

consume.

The great Chinese strategist and thinker once wrote that war should

not be begun unless the end is in sight. Sadly, that admonition of Sun

Tzu was not adhered to in this war in Iraq.

Let me bring us back to what we are all about today. We have been

hearing discussions ranging from both ends of the football field. This

is a very simple, straightforward resolution.

The first part of it is: We fully support the American troops. And I

am going to say, Madam Speaker, we are so proud of them. They are

volunteers, they are professionals, they understand the word duty.

And, secondly: We do not agree with the troop increase of 21,500, for

the simple reason it has not worked in the past, for the simple reason

it is going to cause somewhere between 2,500 and 13,000 support troops

to support that effort. And, consequently, it is not a well-thought-out

tactic. And despite the fact that some wish to call it a strategy, it

is a tactic, and there is a large difference between the two.

Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may

consume.

My friend from New York, a fellow member of the Armed Services

Committee, Mr. McHugh, a good friend, I must agree with him on one

comment that he made when he said, I am troubled by the course that

lies ahead.

Madam Speaker, I am very troubled about the course that lies ahead.

That is what we are about this evening. We have seen an irretrievable

strategic mistake made in Iraq that put us where we are. And

consequently it brings us to this point where we express our concern

and disagreement with the increase in troops in this crucial time in

Iraq and allows us the opportunity to say thank you. We are proud of

you, each of you who wears the American uniform.