Mr. Speaker, as a veteran, as you have heard, of the

United States Army, myself, I strongly support our troops, our veterans

and their families. Let me state at the outset that our troops have

done everything that has been asked of them to do. They have done it

well. Exceptionally well, I might say.

More than 34,000 from North Carolina have been deployed on Operation

Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. And more than 5,000 are

currently over there now. More are preparing to go back to the desert

once again.

I am tremendously proud of all the troops from North Carolina and

across America who have laced up their boots, followed their orders,

and done their duty. They are our heroes, and we salute them.

Regardless if one terms the President's announced change in policy a

surge or an escalation or an augmentation, the so-called new plan can

be summed up in four words: more of the same.

I myself have traveled to Iraq twice. And after I returned last year

I said the administration must change from this failed policy.

Specifically, I said that we need more burden-sharing support from

other countries, more communities and countries in the region, because

the whole world has a tremendous stake in a stable Iraq and a peaceful

Middle East.

This administration's arrogant disregard for our international

partners has destroyed U.S. alliances that were decades in the making.

Those alliances saw us through the darkest days of the cold war when

the very existence of our country hung in the balance. Yet, this

administration tossed them aside like yesterday's news.

It is a sad tragedy to witness the forfeiture of America's moral

standing in the world and the abandonment of diplomacy as an effective

asset for America's interests.

We need to bring all the parties to the table and discuss cooperative

action to secure Iraq's long-term stability and a peaceful Middle East.

Mr. Speaker, I voted to give the President the authority to topple

Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq because he said it presented a ``grave

and gathering threat to America.''

The President said Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass

destruction and intended to use them against America.

The President said Saddam was in cahoots with Osama bin Laden's al

Qaeda terrorists. I took the President of the United States of America

at his word. We have learned, to our great regret, what that was worth.

Now the President wants to send 21,000 more troops to Baghdad.

Republican Senator Arlen Specter called the new deployment ``a snowball

in July.'' An outgoing commander of the Central Command, with

responsibility for Iraq, told the Senate last November, and I quote,

``I do not believe that more American troops right now is the solution

to the problem. I believe the troop levels need to stay about where

they are.''

And the former Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services

Committee, John Warner, a decorated marine and former Secretary of the

Navy, said last month, ``I feel very strongly that the American GI was

not trained, not sent over there, certainly not by resolution of this

institution, to be placed in the middle of a fight between Sunni and

Shiia and the wanton and just incomprehensible killing that is going on

at this time.''

Mr. Speaker, I have voted for every defense bill and war funding

legislation that Congress has passed for Iraq. I am very concerned

about the state of readiness of our American Armed Forces.

As the Representative for Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base, I know

that America's military and our military communities have many unmet

needs, while the war in Iraq continues to consume more and more public

dollars, with no end in sight.

In conclusion, I rise in support of this resolution with no joy in my

heart, but with solid conviction in my soul. The failure of this

administration has gone unchecked and unchallenged by the Congress of

the United States for far

too long. We need a new direction in Iraq.

The question before Congress is this: Is more of the same in Iraq an

acceptable policy? The answer is no.