Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Armed Services

Committee and a member of the Board of Visitors of the United States

Naval Academy, I rise today to express my unwavering support for the

men and women who wear the uniform of our proud Nation and to make

clear my staunch opposition to putting more of these men and women in

harm's way in Iraq.

In the absence of a clear and meaningful strategy for success, it is

time to extricate our troops out of this civil war and redeploy them

out of the occupation of Iraq.

Back in 2002, I joined my colleagues in the Congressional Black

Caucus in formulating a brief and succinct statement of principles

regarding the Iraq war. Within these principles we expressed our clear

opposition to a unilateral first strike action in the absence of clear

evidence of an imminent threat to the United States. We further stated

that any post-strike plan for maintaining stability in the region would

be costly and would likely require a long-term commitment of our troops

and treasure.

Today, it is very clear that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein has

provoked sectarian divisions in the Iraqi society that are now

expressed daily through violence on a staggering scale. It is also

clear that our efforts to stabilize Iraq has, indeed, required the

massive commitment of both lives and taxpayer dollars that we

predicted.

What was not clear then but is clear now is that this administration

had no definite plan for achieving our stated objectives in Iraq.

The administration had lofty rhetoric, but no strategy for creating a

stable democracy that could be our partner in the war on terror.

Mr. Speaker, I raise these points to remind our Congress that from

the beginning of this war there have been voices raised not in

opposition to our President but in demand of a strategic approach to

the growing threats we face, opposition and demand of an honest

assessment of what could be accomplished with military force, and in

demand of a clear purpose for why we send our troops into harm's way,

our young men and women, the future of our Nation into situations where

they may seriously be injured or killed. These are the very points that

the resolution before us today demands.

I have no illusions about the danger inherent in the growing number

of nations that may soon have the capability to construct weapons of

mass destruction. To the contrary, I am convinced that maintaining the

peace in this increasingly dangerous world has become a precondition to

our continued survival.

The question is, given the situation in which we find ourselves in

Iraq and given that our primary consideration must always be the

security of our Nation, is sending additional troops into action most

likely to stabilize that nation and the region? Is it the action most

likely to cause Iraqis themselves to take the essentially political

actions that only they can take to create a government capable of

governing? Is

it the action likely to initiate the reconciliation between Sunni and

Shiite, and the most recent National Intelligence Estimate says is

critical to reducing the violence in Iraq?

I have seen no compelling evidence that the answer to any of these

questions is ``yes,'' and many of our top military commanders have

testified that sending 21,500 more United States forces to Iraq will

not create a path to success.

Our forces have done all and more than we have asked them to do, and

their families have been patiently sacrificing for 4 long years. The

voters spoke in November, and we as Members of Congress of the United

States do not have the right to remain silent. We cannot allow more to

be asked of our soldiers now if their mission is not clear. The

President has no plan likely to produce victory. And if, as the

National Intelligence estimates suggest, the Iraqi forces and the

government are not capable of being partners in their own

reconstruction, I urge my colleagues to support our troops by

supporting this resolution.