Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res.

63. The State of Texas has a proud history of military service.

Thousands of Texans have fought with distinction in every conflict this

country has entered.

Hundreds of my constituents are currently serving in Iraq and

Afghanistan. They are willing to leave behind their families and

friends to risk their lives in service to their country. Many will

never return home. Many will come home maimed and injured.

I want to read the names of the young people from the 15th District

of Texas who have given their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan: Darrell

Shipp, Benito Ramirez, Javier Marin, Julio Alvarez, Gary Moore, Tomas

Garces, Mark Anthony Zapata, Juan Calderon, Christopher Ramirez, Dustin

Sekula, Juan Garza, James Kesinger, Mitchell Mutz, John Russell,

Quinton Gertson, Christopher Kilpatrick, Tina Priest, and Daniel

Galvan.

I know how much their families and friends have grieved at their

loss. I have spoken to their parents and spouses and have attended many

of their funerals. We are all so very proud of their military service

and know they did their very best.

However, as an elected Representative of the United States

Government, I have a responsibility to make sure that the sacrifices of

these brave men and women were not in vain.

I have a responsibility to see that more Americans will not be

sacrificed unnecessarily. I have supported the funding to give our

military the body armor, the equipment and training they need, and I

will continue to see that they have whatever they need. But I will not

support an administration policy that puts more troops in harm's way,

with no apparent end in sight and with no clear goals on how to win the

fight.

In 2002, I stood in this well and I spoke on that resolution giving

the President permission to go to war, and I voted against going to war

with Iraq because I didn't believe we had all the information we needed

on Iraq's nuclear capabilities and weapons of mass destruction and its

support for terrorism. I was concerned that the President had not

convinced the 39 countries who had supported us in the previous war

with Iraq. I was disappointed that the President did not have an exit

plan after we defeated Iraq. And I was disappointed that the President

would not put in the budget what we were going to spend on that war.

No one denies that Saddam Hussein was a cruel dictator who brutally

oppressed his people, and I am glad that the Iraqis are free of this

tyranny. But the Bush administration did not have accurate information

then, and I don't believe they have an accurate picture of the

situation today.

Our troops are now caught in the middle of a civil war between

religious groups that have hated each other for centuries. There is no

defined enemy and no clear battle lines.

The task of imposing and growing democracy in a place where it has

never been is not the job of our military. It must come from the

political will of the Iraqi people. Only the Iraqis can decide whether

they want to put aside centuries of discord and come together to create

a stable, democratic country where the rights of every group is

recognized. The Iraqi Government must take responsibility for its own

future.

After more than 4 years, the U.S. is not safer because of our efforts

in Iraq. By dividing our resources, we have allowed the Taliban to

reemerge in Afghanistan and have given al Qaeda a strong foothold that

it never had before in Iraq. Syria and Iran have gained influence

throughout the entire region.

We have spent hundreds of billions of dollars at the expense of

critical programs at home like education, health care and homeland

security. Our military is severely strained with troops on their third

and fourth tours of Iraq. Units are being deployed, either understaffed

or with new personnel, that has decreased unit cohesiveness,

proficiency and morale. Equipment is worn out and our readiness to deal

with an additional crisis is in jeopardy.

Unfortunately, most of his generals disagree. The distinguished

members of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group disagree, and more

importantly, the American people disagree.

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting H. Con. Res. 63 and

opposing the President's decision to send more troops to Iraq.

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