Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member of the

Intelligence Committee, my friend from Michigan.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to H. Con. Res. 63,

the Democrats' nonbinding resolution that does nothing to improve the

outcome of the war, but does much to hurt the war against terrorism.

The resolution claims they support the troops. However, regardless of

what the previous speaker said, they refuse to protect the money our

troops must have while they are in harm's way.

If we wanted to have a meaningful debate on the real issues facing

this country, we would take up Congressman Sam Johnson's bill that

opposes any effort to cut off or restrict funding for our military.

But that is not the debate we are having today. Instead, we are

debating a nonbinding resolution that, in my mind, can only hurt our

troops who are on the battlefield as we speak, and this resolution can

only give comfort to those who wish to kill Americans.

Making Iraq a secure place is difficult because of deep-seated

religious and ethnic divisions. This is highlighted by the murderous

acts of Saddam's dictatorship that killed so many thousands. In

addition, al Qaeda and local terrorists along with hostile foreign

governments, including Iran, have both encouraged and funded the

current violence in the hopes that Iraq will not follow the path to

democracy. They must not be allowed to succeed.

Any American lives lost in the defense of our Nation is one too many.

Yet we must not turn from our task of defeating terrorism before the

job is done. President Bush is the Commander in Chief and intends to

reinforce American troop strength by 21,000 soldiers to help Iraq's new

government finally control violence and restore order. While I believe

the decision to increase troop strength in Iraq could have been made

much sooner and in greater numbers, it today presents the only viable

option to bringing order to the country and laying the foundation for

Iraqi Government control of that nation's security.

Iraq's government is taking new steps to control the violence from

all ethnic groups and made it clear that

our abandoning them at this stage would guarantee failure for democracy

in Iraq. And it would ensure a tremendous setback in America's battle

to deny terrorism a foothold and give them more chances to continue to

kill Americans. Pulling back now with no viable plan to stabilize Iraq

would be a disastrous action. This sentiment was expressed in the most

recent National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the NIE is the intelligence community's

most authoritative written judgments on national security issues and is

designed to help us develop policies to protect U.S. national security

interests. Specifically, this report states: ``Coalition capabilities,

including force levels, resources, and operations, remain an essential

stabilizing element in Iraq.'' In addition, it goes on to say: ``If

coalition forces were withdrawn rapidly during the term of this

estimate, we judge that this almost certainly would lead to a

significant increase in the scale and scope of sectarian conflict in

Iraq, intensify Sunni resistance to the Iraqi Government, and have

adverse consequences for national reconciliation.''

While America must not be in Iraq indefinitely, we should not leave

without ensuring that the terrorists that are there are put down. To do

otherwise would be terribly shortsighted and would ultimately embolden

our terrorist enemies who have made no secret of their desire to

continue to kill Americans.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee and Intelligence

Committee, I have monitored the developments in the war on terrorism,

including those in Iraq. I met with President Bush in the White House

to discuss the military mission in Iraq shortly after he outlined his

strategy for Iraq in early January. We explored what would happen in

Iraq, the Middle East, and America if we withdrew from the fight before

Iraq's democratic government is strong enough to maintain the peace.

Our conclusion was that Iraq would become a sanctuary for terrorists

and a base from which they could launch future attacks against

Americans.

Some Members have tried to claim that the war in Iraq has nothing to

do with the war on terrorism. That is the only way they can justify

this nonbinding resolution, and that is pure nonsense.

We have the greatest military on the face of the Earth, one that no

other military dare stand before lest they be destroyed. The only thing

that can defeat us is the lack of will. And may God help us if we lose

the will to defend this great Nation against terrorism.