Mr. Speaker, of course I rise today in strong

opposition to this resolution.

It occurs to me, Mr. Hunter, that I need to thank you not only for

your service, but for your son's service in the Marine Corps. It is one

of those little twists of those things that I served my whole life in

the Marine Corps, and my son is serving in the Army. You served in the

Army, and your son is serving in the Marine Corps. And I don't know if

we will ever untwist this. But I thank you and him for his service.

Mr. Speaker, the proponents of this resolution will have us believe

that this resolution supports and protects our military personnel while

criticizing the President for changing course.

We have listened to several speakers today who, like me, served in

Vietnam and witnessed firsthand the micromanagement of the war from

Washington. Ironically, they stand here today endorsing the same

incompetent policy of interference. Instead of President Johnson

choosing bombing targets, however, we have 535 legislators dictating

General Petraeus's reinforcement levels; yes, dictating his tactics. It

was wrong in 1967, Mr. Speaker, and it is wrong in 2007.

I notice that the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services

Committee has risen several times today to point out his belief that

what the President is doing is not a change of strategy, it is a change

of tactics. And I would say to my good friend, that great gentleman

from Missouri, that if that is right, if this is tactics, then in fact

this resolution is trying to do just that, micromanage the tactics of

this war.

If congressional micromanagement were the only problem with this

resolution, I would still argue vigorously for its defeat. But it is

not the only problem. Understanding the purpose and intent of this

resolution, its proponents have revealed their true intentions in the

course of this debate. They intend for this resolution to be the first

step on the path to defunding our troops, withdrawing them, and

allowing Iraq to become a chaotic, ungoverned space that will act as a

training ground for al Qaeda and the radical jihadists that we are at

war with.

Though few in the West knew it, a new war had already begun during my

days as commander of Marine aviation forces in Somalia. In the intense

battle in the back alleys of Mogadishu that inspired the movie

``Blackhawk Down'' and the bombing of vulnerable U.S. embassies in

Tanzania and Kenya captured America's attention briefly, but it took an

unprecedented attack on our homeland for the country to realize what

Islamic extremists had long known: The United States was at war. And I

think Mr. Saxton did a very thorough and eloquent job of explaining the

length and nature of this war. Every country was now a potential front

and every city a battlefield in the enemy's war against Zionist

crusaders and nonbelievers. Whether by design or not, Iraq has become

the front in not only a physical war of attrition, but in the war of

wills between free societies and Islamic jihadists who seek to destroy

them.

The proponents of this flawed resolution prefer to ignore reality.

They believe that repeating the mistaken belief that Iraq is not a

central front in the war against Islamic jihadists will make that

perception real. Unfortunately for those who hold this belief, the

enemy, our enemy has a say in the matter. Al Qaeda's second in command,

al-Zawahiri, in December 2006, made it quite clear where al Qaeda

stands. In a video posted on jihadist Web sites, al-Zawahiri sent a

clear message: ``The backing of Jihad in Afghanistan and Iraq today is

to back the most important battlefields in which the crusade against

Islam and Muslims is in progress. And the defeat of the Crusaders

there, soon, Allah permitting, will have a far-reaching effect on the

future of the Muslim Ummah, Allah willing.''

We have heard repeatedly that al Qaeda and the jihadist terrorists

understand that Iraq is the central front in this war against radical

Islam. Thankfully, the U.S. military leadership has also recognized

this fact.

In his recent testimony before the Senate, General David Petraeus was

asked if he believes that Iraq affects the overall war on terror. His

response was clear and unequivocal: ``I do, sir.''

Clearly, there are elements of the greater al Qaeda network of

international extremists that want something very different than most

Iraqis want, and want something very different in that region and in

the world.

Many mistakes have been made as our military, unparalleled in

conventional strength and maneuver, has changed strategy and tactics to

fight the counterinsurgency battle. In response to the frustration at

the lack of progress felt by those in Iraq and at home, the American

military demonstrated its greatest strength: the ability to adapt to

new conditions on the ground and develop new strategy.

To those who have lived and studied the art of military strategy and

tactics, the plan we debate this week, developed by American commanders

in Iraq and here at home, represents a fundamental shift. In a study

updated last week, Anthony Cordesman from the nonpartisan Center for

Strategic and International Studies, declared that, ``Much of the

criticism of the new Bush approach has been unfair. The new strategy is

considerably more sophisticated and comprehensive than the details the

President could fit into his 20-minute address,'' or, I might add, Mr.

Speaker, than I can include in this 10-minute address, ``presuming it

combines political, military and economic action in ways that do offer

a significant hope of success.''

But rather than acknowledge the comprehensive nature of the new

Baghdad and al-Anbar security plan, opponents prefer to ignore the

pleas of General Petraeus to provide him with the troops necessary to

turn the security situation in Iraq's capital city around. Instead,

they pat him on the back, wish him ``Godspeed'' in his endeavor, and

then promptly move to deny him that which he has requested and needs to

succeed. As a Vietnam veteran, I cannot in good conscience watch as

Congress once again undercuts the morale of those in uniform.

I will not stand idly by and watch others resurrect the ghost of that

painful conflict, and we have heard it resurrected many times this day,

Mr. Speaker, without acknowledging the slaughter and humanitarian

disaster that resulted from the fall of Saigon. And it was a

humanitarian disaster. Millions died. Just as in 1974, decisions we

make today in this body will have consequences for entire nations and

generations to come. History stands ready to judge the wisdom of this

body, its ability to learn from past mistakes and its ability to

comprehend the ramifications of its actions. In spite of countless

warnings, I fear we will come up short in the eyes of posterity.

Opponents call for the administration to heed the advice of its

generals, only to reject the commanders' pronouncement when such states

are at odds with their own misguided perceptions. They criticize the

``cherry-picking'' of prewar intelligence, and then proceed to do just

that, while reading the most recent National Intelligence Estimate,

choosing to ignore the dire warnings of the Intelligence Community's

most authoritative written judgments on national security issues.

But to those who criticize this new security plan and offer no

solutions for success, only demands for capitulation, we must demand

that they answer a vital question they choose to ignore: What will

happen if the Iraqi Government does not succeed and we withdraw

prematurely?

One critic of the administration's handling of Iraq, a very vocal

critic, and a man who I knew and admired throughout my Marine Corps

career, retired General Anthony Zinni, the former commander of Central

Command, spelled it out bluntly when he noted that, ``We cannot simply

pull out, as much as we may want to. The consequences of a destabilized

and chaotic Iraq sitting in the center of a critical region in the

world could have catastrophic implications.''

The recent National Intelligence Estimate was even more specific in

its analysis. If the United States were to withdraw rapidly, the Iraqi

security forces would likely collapse, neighboring countries might

intervene openly in the conflict; massive civilian casualties and

forced population displacement would be probable; and al Qaeda in Iraq

would attempt to use parts of the country to plan increased attacks in

and outside of Iraq.

It seems pretty clear to me, Mr. Speaker, what we are debating here

is success or failure.

Let us not support that catastrophe. Let us not promote a

humanitarian disaster which is almost unimaginable. Let us support

success in Iraq. Let us support the new commander in Iraq and give him

what he needs to succeed in this mission.