Madam Speaker, first of all, I think that I speak for all

of our colleagues and all of us here in paying tribute to the 137,000-

some-odd American men and women who are fighting in Iraq, the 25,000 or

so that are fighting in Afghanistan. We are here to do what we can to

honor them. We are trying to express our patriotism. We are trying to

do what we are obligated to do by standing up here.

The notion that it is our patriotic duty, our obligation to sit

silent and to do whatever the President thinks is best and blindly walk

in that direction, that is not the way to honor the troops that are

there. I can imagine the challenges that they face every single day,

and would the message going back to them be most appropriate that just

as often as they wake up in the deserts of Iraq trying to figure out

why people are shooting at them and what they can do to stop it, they

should know that every single day we here in Congress are trying to

think about ways to make their mission safer and make it more possible

for them to accomplish their mission and to extract them as soon as

possible. We pray that they are successful. Although I strongly oppose

the President's initiative, that I am going to vote ``yes'' on this

resolution, I pray that they are successful. I pray we don't lose

another life. We want them to be successful. But it is not enough just

to be silent and to be prayerful. We also have to act.

Some in this Chamber have objected to this resolution because what it

seeks to do is to do two things: one is the thing that I have done

already, which is to pay tribute to the troops, something we all share

in doing; and two is begin on a path of oversight. It is not surprising

at all to hear my friends on the other side of the aisle have such a

difficult concept with this idea of doing oversight over something the

President proposes. They have done no oversight over how the money has

been spent over there, and so as a result, we found out in the first

month of the Democratic Congress that a $12 billion pallet of currency

was delivered to Iraq and promptly disappeared. We had hearings last

week that showed that even Mr. Bremer and officials on the ground from

the administration have no idea where $12 billion disappeared to. So it

is not surprising that my Republic friends have a difficult time

figuring out what it is we are doing here. We are doing oversight, and

we are going to do more of it.

We are doing oversight over the equipment that the troops had. This

weekend there were stories coming outside of Iraq that Iranian-built

armor-piercing projectiles were being used in roadside bombs. It

reminded us again that the troops had been sent there without

sufficient hardware, without sufficient protective gear, without

sufficient armor-plated vehicles to be able to do their job. We are

going to do oversight on that as well.

And I have to say that as part of the oversight that we are doing

today, we are doing oversight on how the troops are being used. And let

us not kid ourselves. The troops have done a remarkable job. They have

done just about every single thing we have asked. They brought down a

dictator. They set up a trial. They allowed a government to be stood

up. They built roads and bridges. They have done an extraordinary job,

and we in this House support them in that work.

But now what is their mission? Their mission is essentially to stand

in the middle of a shooting match of the worst order. It is not over a

patch of land. It is not a shooting match over what a border is going

to be. It is not a shooting match even over oil. It is a shooting match

of the most ingrained type between Shia and Sunni that goes back

hundreds of years. Are our troops going to solve that conflict with

20,000 troops or 40,000 troops? I don't believe so. And even worse, I

believe it is an untenable mission to be giving them. They are

essentially in a schoolyard where everyone wants to fight.

And I have to say to my friends on the other side of the aisle, over

and over and over again today I have heard this dynamic being described

that if we were to leave or to support this resolution, we would let

down our allies, we would embolden our enemies, and we would betray the

Iraqi people. In fact, this policy does all of those things. Let us

look at it.

What does this policy say to our allies? Well, it says to our allies

in Afghanistan we are not going to devote the resources there necessary

for you to do the job. This isn't an abstract notion. You can watch it

happen every single day. So long as we have 140,000 troops or 130,000

troops in this shooting match largely in Baghdad, we are watching as

Afghanistan slips further and further back into the hands of the

Taliban.

We have heard, for example, from our so-called ally the Saudis, and

what have they said? They have been most telling. They said recently,

well, to you, the citizens of the United States, if you pull your

troops out, we are going to be forced to put resources in to support

our Sunni brethren. So the Saudis have said if the American troops

leave, we are going to have to jump in on the side of our Sunni

brethren in Baghdad. What does that say? What does that say? That says

they will jump into a blood-letting, but they won't come in now to help

us stabilize Baghdad. They have argued, essentially, that the only

reason they are not involved is our troops are. Some ally. Some message

we are sending to our ally Saudi Arabia. What they are saying is, You

had better keep your boys dying because otherwise we are going to have

to send ours in.

That is exactly what we want. We want them to send they resources in.

We want them to take ownership of this.

And the same is true with Egypt and other allies in the region. They

have said to us, You had better keep doing what you are doing, Mr.

President. We are getting exactly the wrong message.

And I have also heard my colleagues speak frequently today about

emboldening our enemies. Well, it seems like just about anything

Democrats propose is emboldening our enemies.

Let us take a closer look at this. Is Iran truly upset about what is

going on in Iraq? Are the Iranians truly wringing their hands every day

saying, Boy oh boy, I hope the United States does not pull out of

there? No. They have never been happier with this existing policy.

Their worst elements, their worst Shia elements, are crossing over the

border practically at will, joining the fight. The President of the

United States himself has said it. I have heard people here on the

floor say it. They like this confrontation that is going on. They want

it to be like this.

But they are happy for another reason, and I say this particularly to

my friends on the other side of the aisle. They are happy because I am

truly concerned about the threat that Iran poses not only to the United

States but to the world. Do you think we are in a position right now

with our military stretched so thin that if we needed to act against

Iran, we could? No. Our engagement in Baghdad, adding more and more and

more troops, has stretched us thinner and thinner and thinner. And the

most happy people in the world are the tyrants in Iran because they

know they can get away with just about anything. And if you think I am

wrong about that, take a look at the war back last year on the northern

border of Israel. Hezbollah felt completely unencumbered, which is

essentially, as we all know, an agent of Iran. They felt completely

unencumbered again just to attack a democracy in the region because

they knew that all of us were stretched entirely too thin to be able to

respond. So this notion that we are going to send the wrong message to

our enemies is completely wrong.

Do you know what would send the right message to our enemies, I say

to my colleagues? You take some of those troops out of Baghdad, you put

them on the Iranian border. That is how you send them a message. You

get them out of the shooting match, but you keep them in the

neighborhood. You keep them right on the border of Iran and you say, We

don't need 140,000, but we are going to make sure you don't export any

more problems. We are going to seal off the schoolyard.

And, finally, I have heard it said that this will be an abandonment

of the Iraqi people. Well, ladies and gentlemen, there is no element

here that I am more disappointed with, and I think I speak virtually

for all of us. Our troops are in there trying to create stability in

Iraq, and for some reason, overwhelming numbers of Iraqis say that they

think it is okay to shoot at our troops. It is outrageous. It is

outrageous. Our troops are in there trying as best they can to build

this country, put it back together, and the Iraqi people over and over

again are saying, You know what, it is kind of okay when I read stories

about snipers shooting at our troops.

The Iraqi people have to have a moment where they confront the

reality of the situation. Everyone agrees, I think, and whenever I say

that, I hear someone come to the floor and think that everything is

going just fine in Iraq, but just about everyone agrees that the Iraqi

people themselves ultimately have to take responsibility for their own

country.

Are we creating an environment that is more likely to happen or less

likely to happen? Well, there is no sign that it is happening; so the

de facto response to my own question is that it is not happening. But I

would argue that every time we stand up and put additional troops in,

we push the Iraqi people further from the point where they have to

confront that they have to take control. Might it be messy? Yes. Might

it even be bloody? Yes. But one thing is for sure: up to now the Iraqi

people have simply said, We are not going to. We don't have to. We have

got our boys from the United States of America, and now we have another

20, 30, 40,000 that are going to be rolling into town.

My colleagues, I have heard my friends on the other side of the aisle

complain, and I have to say, present company excluded, it sounded a

little like whining most of the day. I have heard, well, we need more

choices. I have heard we need more bills. I have heard we need more

language. There are going to be plenty of opportunities to confront

these issues, but today my colleagues have to confront the choice in

front of them. Sometimes in this job you have to say ``yea'' or

``nay.'' And this week what you have to say ``yea'' or ``nay'' on is a

resolution that is exquisite in its simplicity. It says two things and

two things only. It says we support the troops. We are going to keep

them safe. We are going to keep them secure. We are going to do

anything that they need to show our support. And, two, we disapprove of

the way the President wants to increase the number of troops going

there. That is it. You are going to get to vote on other things later

on because we are not done. Many of us believe very strongly that we

need major tactical changes, and I know Mr. Murtha has a plan. The Blue

Dog Caucus has a plan for more transparency. There are going to be

plenty of choices. You are going to get oversight.

I know it has been years, I say to my colleagues, since you have seen

any around here, but you are going to get it. But today what we have is

a simple proposition. It is the same proposition that is being

discussed in coffee shops, in church socials, in corner stores all

around this country, and that is: Do we support what the President is

doing by increasing our engagement rather than reducing it? That is

what this is about. And all of the foot stamping and all of the

complaining and all of the whining, I want another bill, I want

different language, I want to deal with something different, I want a

hug, well, for the time being this is the choice that you are

confronted with.

If you believe that this surge is the right policy, you have a simple

vote. You can vote ``no.'' If you believe that you don't want to

support the troops, and there is no one like that, you can vote ``no.''

But this resolution is the beginning of finally starting to do what the

American people are thirsting for, and that is this Chamber is a place

where we stand up and say whether we support these things or not.

I urge a ``yes'' vote.

Madam Speaker, I honor the gentleman for his mastery of

the numbers. Perhaps you can enlighten me, what is the number of

Reserves that are in country now?

If the gentleman will yield for a further question, are

there any there doing second or third tours of duty?

If the gentleman will further yield, is it not your view

that that has a dramatic toll only those families and communities who

are not regular army who are there as Reservists and are being called

back tour after tour? You don't think that is stretching those

communities thin?

If the gentleman will yield further, I thank the

gentleman very much. I think what you have just described is a military

stretched thin, my friend. I think when you have people in the Reserves

doing three tours, that are being taken away from their communities, I

think that is a military stretched thin.