Mr. Speaker, for more than 200 years the men and women of

the United States military have, through their valiant actions, earned

a well-deserved reputation for courage, honor, and sacrifice in defense

of liberty. The brave Americans now fighting and dying in Iraq are

heirs to a legacy that flows from Lexington and Concord through

Normandy, straight up to the present day. They should be very proud of

what they have accomplished in Iraq, and they deserve our firm support

as they continue to face danger there.

I am sure that my colleagues who support H. Res. 557 are sincere in

their desire to salute our troops. However, I feel they have committed

a grave error by confusing the valor and the sacrifice of our troops

with the misguided and misleading policy that sent them to Iraq in the

first place.

Members of Congress voted in good faith for a resolution on the use

of force believing that Iraq was capable of unleashing deadly weapons

of mass destruction. We were told that the threat was imminent and

could directly impact our Nation's security. Certainly the people of

Iraq had suffered from the brutal regime of Saddam Hussein, but this

was not the primary reason given for the preemptive strike by the

United States.

It is good that Congress is on record listing the many atrocities of

Saddam Hussein's regime. Saddam was a brutal dictator. That is not

debatable. What is debatable is whether our actions in Iraq have

improved the security of the United States and our allies. I therefore

question the resolution's assertion that ``the United States and the

world have been made safer with the removal of Saddam Hussein and his

regime from power in Iraq.'' In fact, our laser beam focus on Iraq,

with no proven connections to 9/11, has allowed al Qaeda to regroup and

again unleash its destructive capabilities on one of our closest

allies. Moreover, I believe our involvement in Iraq is a major

contributing factor to America's declining image around the world,

which Margaret Tutwiler, the administration's head official in charge

of public diplomacy, admitted ``will take us many years of hard,

focused work'' to restore.

When the President announced on May 1 of last year that major combat

operations in Iraq had ceased, I expected a quick draw-down of American

troops and a significant increase of United Nations peacekeepers.

Tragically, our Nation has lost more American men and women in Iraq

after the President's declaration that major hostilities had ended. The

total now stands in excess of 565 and is climbing.

This resolution is disingenuous. In its place should be a

straightforward resolution of commendation for those who fought

valiantly and risked their lives to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime.

And condolences to those whose lives were snatched from them in this

most unjustified conflict.