Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the greatest asset our

Nation has known, those heroes, and they are heroes, that we call on

every time when we need courage and effectiveness on the battlefield,

the incredible American soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines that

reflect the best attributes of those who have served before them; and

they are a wonderful reflection of America across our country. So we

thank them and we honor them.

Like many Members, I have had the privilege of traveling to Iraq

twice, this last time with our minority leader, the gentlewoman from

California (Ms. Pelosi), and with the gentleman from North Carolina

(Mr. Hayes) from the Committee on Armed Services.

And what was clear is that our men and women are doing an

extraordinary job in the most trying of circumstances. They are

superbly trained, superbly led, and are just the finest force in the

world. We owe them a great debt of gratitude.

We also owe the same to more than 550 families of those who have

given the ultimate sacrifice to our Nation in Iraq. But what was also

clear in my trips, there was no effective or realistic planning done

for the aftermath of the military invasion of Iraq. We did a superb job

on the battlefield; but since that time, sadly, as I warned the

President in two letters, September 4, 2002, and then one a couple of

days before the actual invasion, I feared the outcome and I warned the

administration in these letters about what the potential consequences

might be of getting the post-war wrong.

Sadly now, we are seeing those consequences come home to roost, and

some of the issues that I raised in those letters are sadly coming to

pass today.

While the Iraqis now have an interim constitution and we should

congratulate them for that, it is no clearer now than it was back in

November, when the timetable for transformation was laid out, who will

take over on June 30. Now it looks like there will be no status of

forces agreement negotiated before that time. Let me tell my

colleagues, a status of forces agreement is very important because it

can establish limitations. It could establish rules of engagement that

make it more difficult for our forces to protect themselves.

Perhaps most dangerously we see more signs of ethnic and religious

strife, raising the possibility of a civil war in Iraq. I truly hope

that does not happen, but the tensions are growing, and there are

insurgents and foreign fighters who have fanned those flames. Today's

most deadly and tragic bombing of the hotel in Baghdad seems to be the

only recent sign of this. We need to do a better job in planning.

Everything we have worked to achieve in Iraq will be undermined if we

do not figure out who we are turning sovereignty over to on June 30 and

how to manage the transition in a way that avoids civil war.

These are dangerous times. This is not an easy day for our troops or

for the leadership in our country, and that is why I raise these

issues, Mr. Speaker. The security of the Iraqi people, the security of

our troops, the stability in the region, and even our own national

security depends on doing this right.

I will support this resolution because I support the men and women

who are sacrificing daily, and I support those families who are

fighting the insurgency in making Iraq secure, but I urge the

administration to do the hard planning, to figure out quickly what will

happen after June 30 to hold off a potential civil war, and we cannot

have that.

We must not let last year's military victory become a long-term

defeat because of more failures due to the tough planning ahead. June

30 is a date that must be taken very seriously by our country. We must

make sure there is a stable Iraqi transition, and that it works;

because if it does not work, if there is civil war, all of the

sacrifices of those young men and women in uniform, whether wounded or

killed, and the families that have grieved and shared their burdens

with them, will have been in vain. We really, really cannot afford to

have that.

So let us praise the troops. And every American should be proud of

them as I am.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

National security is not only a bipartisan effort, it is truly a

nonpartisan effort. On the Committee on Armed Services, under the

chairmanship of the gentleman from California (Mr. Hunter), we do our

very best to be bipartisan in nature. And, frankly, it concerns me a

great deal that no Democrat was even asked to make a recommendation on

what might or might not be in this resolution. I would have included

several items including reference to the families. I would have

included reference to those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. I

would have included a wish that the transition on June 30 be done

correctly. And I would include that there should be increased

international participation.

But I was not given that opportunity. Young men and young women from

Democratic homes and from Republican homes and from Independent homes

have paid the ultimate sacrifice. And I think it is incumbent upon

everyone that offers such a serious resolution as this to give

everybody an opportunity to make recommendations and to help write it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time