Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the

time, and it is unfortunate that this resolution has become so

political because I think clearly all of us should have been able to

sit down and come up with a resolution that would be united and that

would send a clear voice to all of the world how much we support our

troops.

We are going to have 4 hours of debate, and there are so many

important things we should be discussing, like the fact that we failed

to provide our troops with critical protection and equipment that they

need, from interceptive body armor to anti-jamming devices, to armored

humvees.

Yesterday, I met with Brian Hart, the father of Private First Class

John Hart who was killed in Iraq last October when the unarmored humvee

that he was patrolling in was ambushed and sprayed with bullets. Just

days before his death, Pfc. Hart called his father and told him how

unsafe he felt riding around in humvees that lacked bulletproof

shielding or reinforced doors.

The story of John Hart is all too familiar. A couple of months ago,

the Defense Department stated that 29 American troops had been killed

and 290 wounded on attacks on humvees. Now I hear they are not even

tracking those numbers anymore, but I do know that of the 18 soldiers

killed in Iraq from Massachusetts, 6 died in unarmored humvees or

trucks.

Look at this chart. Almost 80 percent of the 12,500 humvees deployed

in Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom lack reinforced windows

and doors. The evidence here is overwhelming that we have not gotten

what our troops need fast enough.

And what bothers me is that the Army did not even begin to address

this shortage until August 2003, 3 months after President Bush

announced the end of the war in Iraq. The Secretary of the Army says

that they will get this done by August; but as of today no new orders

have been placed, leaving our troops, many of them, in this vulnerable

position, in unarmed vehicles. August just is not good enough.

For too long, the Army has dragged its feet because it failed to

consider quick, effective alternatives to uparmoring Humvees like

installing add-on armor kits.

If we purchased more add-on kits and reached out to other vendors, we

can get these Humvees armored now.

Recently, 25,000 Marines deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan and took

with them 3,000

trucks and Humvees, all of which have been armored with protective

plating. The Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Hagee, understood

that installing temporary add-on kits provides a quick, easy

alternative to uparmoring Humvees in depots at home. So Gen. Hagee

purchased $9 million worth of add-on armor kits to outfit Humvees

before he sent his Marines back into the battlefield.

I have introduced a resolution urging the Defense Department to use

whatever means possible to armor these Humvees as quickly as they can.

If we truly want to support our Armed Forces, this would provide them

with the critical protection and equipment they deserve!

Mr. Speaker, that is precisely why I could not vote for

it. We were supposed to have this money appropriated. We have troops

over there in unarmed vehicles. It is inexcusable.