Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 557 and claim the

time set aside for us under the rule, and I yield myself such time as I

may consume.

Mr. Speaker, our President, having exhausted all other options, made

the decision to take action against Saddam Hussein and the threat posed

by his evil tyranny. During that course, the debate about that, this

House was presented with an overwhelming body of evidence detailing the

brutal inhumanity of Saddam Hussein and his regime, the suffering of

the Iraqi people under his repressive dictatorship, the threat that

Saddam presented to his neighbors and to the world, and indeed the

piles of bodies in neighboring countries he left behind. Today, now

that Saddam has been removed from power and the mass graves, the secret

laboratories, the vast military stockpiles, missile capacities that he

had, have all been exposed to the world, the world is a safer place.

Certainly the Iraqi people, all Iraqi people, have a new hope for a

better future today than they did just a year ago. Just a year ago.

What a remarkable accomplishment by our troops and the coalition.

Yet we continue to hear claims from some that the liberation of Iraq,

no matter how worthy the result, no matter how necessary to improving

U.S. national security, was somehow a flawed endeavor. Yes, it was

hard, but they claim it was a flawed endeavor because the intelligence

that the United States had prior to the war was not perfect.

Some apparently feel that either the Intelligence Community was

pressured by the administration into stating that Iraq was a threat or

the Intelligence Community did not really believe Iraq was a threat but

the administration misused the intelligence provided to it. The truth

is neither of those are correct. But that has not deterred some

conspiratorially critics from contorting themselves, trying to make

both arguments simultaneously.

Looking back about a year and a half ago, while the Intelligence

Community was focused heavily on Iraq, the President stated that Saddam

was ``a grave and growing threat.'' And he was right. Today we have the

benefit of hindsight, of a presence on the ground in Iraq, and of the

thousands of hours of studying all there is to study on the prewar

intelligence picture of Iraq, and we have barely begun to get that job

finished.

Taking advantage of all these benefits, I would like to share my

assessment so far, and I would note that the Permanent Select Committee

on Intelligence of the House, and I know of the Senate also, is

underway in coming forward with a formal review of all this, which I

hope we will be able to share with our colleagues before too long. That

is our plan.

The intelligence picture of Iraq, of the threat Iraq posed to its

neighbors and to the United States, including the assessment of Iraq's

weapons of mass destruction, was entirely consistent over a period of

almost a decade. The assessment is consistent in the finished

intelligence and the daily current intelligence pieces from the mid-

1990s onward. It is consistent in the classified records that have been

provided to the House Permanent Select Committee on

Intelligence over the past year. So I have to conclude on that basis

alone, if the intelligence adjustments regarding Iraq were the result

of political pressure or manipulation, any such machinations must have

occurred in the middle of the 1990s. But I do not believe that that is

the case. Therefore, if the intelligence picture is unchanging, was

there a change in the substance or tone used by this administration to

describe that threat? We do not need to go to the Intelligence

Community or to any classified records to answer that question. We just

need to compare public statements that have been made, and they are

available to the world.

In 2003 President Bush said this: ``Today, the gravest danger in the

war on terror, the gravest danger facing America and the world, is

outlaw regimes that seek and possess nuclear, chemical, and biological

weapons. These regimes could use such weapons for blackmail, terror,

and mass murder. They could give or sell those weapons to terrorist

allies who would use them without the least hesitation.''

In 1998 then President Bill Clinton said: ``In the next century,''

which is now, ``the community of nations may see more and more the very

kind of threat Iraq poses now, a rogue state with weapons of mass

destruction, ready to use them or provide them to terrorists . . . who

traveled the world . . . if we fail to respond today, Saddam . . . will

be emboldened tomorrow by the knowledge that they can act with

impunity.''

And again in 1998, then President Bill Clinton said: ``There should

be no doubt, Saddam's ability to produce and deliver weapons of mass

destruction poses a grave threat to the peace of that region and the

security of the world . . . His regime threatens the safety of his

people, the stability of his region and the security of all the rest of

us.'' President Clinton, 1998.

Fast forward, 2003, President Bush: ``Some have said we must not act

until the threat is imminent. Since when have terrorists and tyrants

announced their intentions, politely putting us on notice before they

strike . . . Trusting in the sanity and restraint of Saddam Hussein is

not a strategy, and it is not an option.''

Actually, there is not a lot of difference in the leadership that was

taking place in this country on the question of the threat that Saddam

Hussein and his regime and weapons of mass destruction that might be at

his disposal were to the rest of us. It is pretty clear that that was a

consistent view.

So, were the intelligence assessments perfect? No. In fact, comparing

the intelligence assessment to what has been found in Iraq today, it is

clear there were insufficiencies in our intelligence capabilities and

they are of concern to us, and on a bipartisan basis we are looking

into that. What was the cause of these insufficiencies? Perhaps Iraq,

under Saddam, was a difficult target. It was sort of a denied area.

There was a ruthless security apparatus there that made information

gathering inside the country extremely difficult, very dangerous. We

also know that Iraq instituted a truly massive denial and deception

program designed to mislead anyone attempting to learn about Saddam's

weapons of mass destruction and related programs. Virtually everybody

who tried found out that he was involved in denial and deception. So

these factors made intelligence collection a little difficult, but it

is the tough job that intelligence is there for.

So, what else? I found that cuts in intelligence resources,

personnel, and political support in the mid-1990s made many aspects of

the intelligence mission in Iraq even more impossible than what we are

up against.

Where were these cuts most severe? In the case of Iraq, it turns out

it was the decline in our intelligence capabilities that hurt the most.

Human intelligence is where we get more than pictures, more than

fragments. We get insight into the plans and intentions of our target.

What is going on in the minds of the troublemakers? And without good

human intelligence, HUMINT, as we call it, it is very difficult indeed

to get an accurate picture of what an adversary is up to.

Yet from 1991 to 1998, a time of cutbacks for military and

intelligence resources across the board, our human intelligence

capabilities suffered dramatically. The number of officers collecting

information shrank by about a quarter; the number of operating

locations overseas dropped by about a third; reporting sources declined

by almost 40 percent; and the number of intelligence reports produced

were cut in half or thereabouts.

So we add on top of that the politically correct ``nice spies''

guidelines that were posed in 1995, the risk aversion problem, and we

begin to see why information in Iraq was so hard to come by. Good

information about plans and intentions, the eyes and ears, just were

not sufficient.

So despite these severe limitations, I think the scorecard shows that

the United States Intelligence Community provided the best assessment

it could. And referring Members to the Director of Central

Intelligence's recent speech at Georgetown, the assessments were not as

far wrong as some critics of the war would have us believe.

In the final analysis, I think it is important that we get it right.

Saddam was a threat. The United Nations believed he was a threat. The

vast majority of the Western nations, even those outside of the U.S.-

led coalition, believed he was a threat. The U.S. Intelligence

Community assessed consistently that Saddam was a threat. The previous

administration told the American people that Saddam was a threat. And

it has been the official policy of the United States to seek regime

change in Iraq since 1998 across two administrations. The difference

between 1998 and 2003 is that President Bush took the bold action

necessary to address a grave threat where others before him did not.

The world is a safer place for it.

Freedom is not free. The purpose of this resolution is to recognize

the hardships that the men and women who are doing the dangerous, risky

work of protecting our freedoms, the people in our military services,

the people in the coalition, the people who are taking risks. After a

year, we are here to say, you are doing great work, keep it up, we are

so grateful.

We are also including some applause for the people of Iraq who have

gone through miserable times and now have some hope, and they have

completed the remarkable achievement of a temporary constitution

already. This is the sign of a spirited people who are looking for a

better life.

This resolution simply says that and commends that. I believe we can

all agree that these are the times that we can get together and say,

well done, more to do, let us get on with it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the remaining 45 seconds.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the gentlewoman from California

(Ms. Harman) working as the ranking member on our committee to improve

our Intelligence Community and to build support for the Intelligence

Community in this House. It is important that we deal with a subject

like this on a bipartisan basis. I know the gentlewoman from California

(Ms. Harman) is anxious and sincere in her call for action. I am too.

I believe we did have a call for action after 9/11, and I think that

call for action has led us to go forth as the United States of America

and to try to do the right thing on the war on terror. And I think from

time to time as we go through that war, it is fine for us to say to the

troops, well done, God bless you, and it is time to say to people

involved in places like Iraq, we know it is tough, thanks for hanging

in there, you have a better future ahead.

That is what this is about. I thank all Members for having that kind

of understanding and looking ahead. We have a lot to do; we have got to

get along and get it done.