Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Resolution 557,

recognizing the liberation of the Iraqi people and the valiant services

of American and coalition forces.

In the years since the United States led a coalition of willing

States to disarm Saddam Hussein, we have arrested a dictator that

killed hundreds of thousands, possibly as many as 1 million people,

during his reign. We have returned children to school and given the

Iraqi people a new destiny.

I have been to Iraq several times. It continues to be a dangerous

place. Iraq is also a complicated place. There has been a considerable

amount of debate and attention to what we knew before we went to war

and how well our intelligence is measuring up with the realities on the

ground in Iraq.

I would like to take this time to clarify the record on a number of

charges that have been levied against both the administration and our

intelligence community.

A number of Members who voted for the Iraq war resolution claim they

did so because they were fooled by the President who overstated the

threat from Iraq. In fact, some suggest that the administration knew

Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction and went to war

regardless of the facts. These critics do not understand the difference

between intelligence and policy formation.

The President considered the intelligence in Iraq and calculated the

risk of engaging in a conflict with Iraq and decided war was just. He

took action, and we are all safer as a result. Some argue that the

President portrayed Iraq as an ``imminent threat,'' that the

administration misled the American public by overstating the threat

posed by Iraq. This is what he said in January 2003, 2 months before

the war: ``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? If this threat is

permitted to fully and suddenly emerge, all actions, all words, and all

recriminations would come too late. Trusting in the sanity and

restraint of Saddam Hussein is not a strategy and it is not an

option.''

In fact, this President's statements on Iraq are not all that

different from the previous President and his administration's remarks

when they discussed the threat posed by Iraq: ``If we fail to respond

today, Hussein and all those who would follow in his footsteps will be

emboldened tomorrow by the knowledge that they can act with impunity.''

And: ``What if he fails to comply and we fail to act? Some day, some

way, I guarantee you, he will use the arsenal.''

These were President Clinton's words in August of 1998.

Another quote: ``And, indeed, we have information that Iraq has

assisted in the chemical weapons activity in Sudan. We had information

linking bin Laden to the Sudanese regime and the Al Shifa plant.''

These words were written by former National Security Adviser Sandy

Berger.

Another quote: ``Sometimes the United States has to act alone or at

least has to act first. Sometimes we cannot let other countries have a

veto on our foreign policy.'' That was a quote from President Clinton

during his election campaign.

President Bush used the best intelligence available, as it had been

suggested by the former administration, that Iraq was a threat, a

growing threat. The removal of Saddam Hussein and his evil regime from

power was a policy endorsed by both sides of the aisle for more than a

decade. This menace became even more of a concern when examined through

the lens of September 11. Saddam is gone. The world is better because

of it.

Mr. Speaker, we can argue the morality of war all day, but terrorists

do not possess the same concern, as we saw again today. They act, and

they act brutally. Iraq represents another front on the global war on

terrorism. Iraq also represented a dangerous threat to the region and

the world. This country witnessed the consequence of failing to act

strongly against terrorism on September 11, 2001.