Mr. Speaker, the Resolution before us correctly points

out the atrocities that Saddam Hussein perpetuated against his own

people and the importance to Iraq's future to be free from the

oppression of Saddam Hussein. The Resolution properly commends the

members of the U.S. Armed Forces for their valiant service. They have

made tremendous sacrifices on behalf of their country and have served

longer deployments than expected. I extend my condolences to the family

members of U.S. soldiers and civilian personnel who have lost their

lives in Iraq, as well as to the many thousands of soldiers that were

wounded in Iraq. I also express my sorrow and regret for the deaths in

Iraq of Coalition forces and United Nations personnel, as well as for

the unknown number of Iraqi civilians and other noncombatants that

perished in the war. Congress and the Administration have a obligation

to provide our troops with all the resources necessary to carry out

their ongoing mission.

I am pleased that Iraqi Governing Council has adopted an interim

constitution, and that the Council, in cooperation with the

international community, is establishing war crimes tribunals in Iraq

to create a historical record of the war crimes and crimes against

humanity committed by Saddam Hussein and his regime. We must establish

an accurate and complete factual record of these crimes, so that we can

punish the offenders and deter future war crimes by government

officials against their own population.

My support for this resolution in no way signifies my views on other

issues beyond the scope of this resolution. This resolution does not

offer a complete and balanced chronology of events that led to the U.S.

invasion of Iraq. I am most disappointed that both before and after the

war in Iraq the United States consistently failed to broadly engage the

international community. The Administration is only belatedly seeking

international support for our reconstruction efforts in Iraq.

Because of these failures, Americans have paid a heavy price. It is

primarily American troops stationed in Iraq that face continuing

attacks. It is our taxpayers that are being asked to almost exclusively

pay the cost to rebuild Iraq, and these costs are mounting every day.

Iraq is already facing a difficult transition in establishing a

democracy that operates under the rule of law and protects minority

rights. The U.S. must show enough flexibility in working with our

allies to effectively help Iraq during this critical transition period,

so that other countries will pledge both troops and funds to alleviate

the burden on our American soldiers and taxpayers. Ultimately, the best

way that we can support our troops is to reach out more aggressively to

the international community, establish order and security in Iraq, and

transfer authority to the Iraqis in a responsible manner.

Although I support the Resolution, I regret that it was not in order

to consider a Motion to Recommit with instructions. The Motion to

Recommit would have allowed us to strengthen the resolution by urging

the President to: give our troops in Iraq all of the equipment

needed to keep them safe; provide the health care and benefits our

wounded servicemen and women earned when they come home as veterans;

recognize the key contributions made by our Reserve and Guard

components, many of which came from my Congressional district in

Maryland.

This Motion would have also asked the President to acknowledge that

there were serious deficiencies in United States pre-war intelligence

on Iraq, particularly in light of the failure to find any evidence of

WMD programs, and to take action to improve our intelligence community

so that United States troops are better protected and informed for

future conflicts.

Finally, the Motion would have asked the President to seek broader

international support for the reconstruction of Iraq, and to take steps

to correct the deficiencies of the U.S. Government to plan adequately

for the post-war occupation of Iraq.

We should have improved this Resolution to more accurately reflect

our ongoing objectives in our involvement in Iraq.