Mr. Speaker, today we are considering H. Res. 557,

which is intended to praise the efforts of the United States to

liberate the people of Iraq, and to commend the efforts of our valiant

soldiers who are serving in Iraq. Let me state at the outset, I support

our troops and their families who cling to hopes and prayers that our

soldiers will not succumb to harm's way and will be home soon.

I must offer some sobering words regarding this resolution. I believe

that although well intended, the resolution is untimely. It does not

contain any input from Democratic members; it does not honor the over

550 soldiers who have died; or the over 11,000 who have been wounded.

There is no mention of the fact that no Weapons of Mass Destruction

(WMD) were found. I have concluded that the world is not safer today.

There is no doubt that Saddam Hussein was a tyrant and dictator. A

revisiting of the facts leads me to conclude once again though, that

Americans and members of Congress were misled by the Administration.

The administration acted on flawed CIA intelligence, alleged that Iraq

had WMD, and was prepared to use them. The U.N. inspection teams did

not uncover any weapons. Their search for WMD was prematurely aborted.

Over 550 soldiers have been killed. Over 11,000 soldiers have been

wounded. Here at home, the families of our military serving in Iraq,

including reservists, are suffering financially and emotionally. They

know that this mission was ill-conceived. Another problem is that our

troop deployment is thin. Some of them have committed suicide. The

administration and the Defense Department have our troops mired in

a military holding action. The situation is compounded by the fact that

there is no clear exit strategy.

As we tout our efforts to promote democracy, it is still clear that

we are attempting to export our version of democracy, as opposed to

encouraging a form of democracy that will best suit the citizens of

Iraq. Iraq has a long history of sectarian strife amongst Shiites,

Sunnis and ethnic Kurds. As Americans, we are attempting to export our

ideals of democracy. The fact of the matter is, we are still a young

democracy. We still have not mastered the process. As Iraqis prepare

for the adoption of new constitution, they will still be confronted

with the realities of internal sectarian strife that could well

undermine our vision and their hopes for democratic rule.

Regarding the premise that the world is safer now than when Saddam

was in power, the rhetoric fails to square with reality. Al Qaeda,

which was purported to be operating in Iraq pre-invasion, was not.

Clearly, there is no connection between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda.

The facts are clear, terrorist activity by Al Qaeda has escalated. We

need only look at the bombings in Indonesia, Turkey and most recently

in Spain. Does this mean we should cease our efforts against terrorism?

Absolutely not! It does mean that we should be much more circumspect in

the way we go about fighting terrorism. We must build coalitions to

assist us.

Finally, let me say our allies around the world continue to chafe at

the bully of the world persona that is attached to the United States.

We are seeing an increasing erosion of confidence throughout Europe

regarding the foreign policies being promoted by this administration.

The best way we can honor our troops is to provide them with the

equipment they need to be effective. We must provide a clear exit

strategy.

It is indeed unfortunate that we are considering and debating this

resolution which does not adequately honor our troops. I urge the

leadership to withdraw this resolution, It is important for Republicans

to include our Democratic leaders in the crafting of a new resolution.

The new resolution should honor soldiers who have been killed and

wounded. It should also contain language that addresses a plan to bring

our troops home.