Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H. Res. 557. I do so

obviously not because I oppose praising our armed forces, but because

our policy in the Persian Gulf is seriously flawed and an effort to

commend our forces should not be used to rubber-stamp a policy of

folly. To do so is disingenuous. Though this resolution may yield

political benefits to those who are offering it, it will prove to be

historically inaccurate. Justifying pre-emption is not the answer to

avoiding appeasement.

Very few wars are necessary. Very few wars are good and just,

including this one. In reality, most wars are costly beyond measure in

life and limb and economic hardship, including this one. There have

been 566 deaths, 10,000 casualties, and hundreds of billions of dollars

for a ``victory'' that remains elusive. Rather than bragging of victory

we should recognize that the war that rages on has intensified and

spread, leaving our allies and our own people less safe.

Denying that we are interested in oil and that occupying an Islamic

country is not an affront to the sensitivities of most Arabs and

Muslims is foolhardy. Reasserting U.N. Security Council resolutions as

the justification for war further emphasizes our sacrifice of

sovereignty and Congress's reneging on its Constitutional

responsibility on war.

This resolution seems to forget that for too long we were staunch

military and economic allies of Saddam Hussein. This in itself only

demonstrates the folly of our policy of foreign meddling over many

decades from the days of the U.S. installing the Shah of Iran to the

current world-wide spread of hostilities and hatred, our unnecessary

intervention abroad shows so clearly how unintended consequences come

back to haunt generation after generation.

Someday our leaders ought to ask why Switzerland, Sweden, Canada,

Mexico and many other nations are not potential targets of an attack by

Islamic extremists.

Falsely claiming that al-Qaeda was aligned with Saddam Hussein and

using this as a rallying cry to war has now resulted in al-Qaeda

actually having a strong presence and influence in Iraq. Falsely

claiming that Iraq had a supply of weapons of mass destruction has

resulted in a dramatic loss of U.S. credibility, as anti-Americanism

spreads around the world. As a result of this, al-Qaeda recruitment

sadly has been dramatically boosted.

That Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator was never in question, so

reaffirming it here is unnecessary. What we must keep in mind, however,

is that Saddam Hussein was attacking his own people and making war on

Iran when he was essentially an ally of the United States--to the point

where the U.S. Government assisted him in his war on Iran. This support

is made all the more clear when viewing recently-declassified State

Department cables in the days after Donald Rumsfeld traveled to Iraq as

a U.S. envoy in 1983. Here are two such examples:

This resolution praises the new constitution for Iraq, written by

U.S. experts and appointees. No one stops to consider the folly of the

U.S. and the West believing they can write a constitution for a country

with a completely different political and social history than ours. The

constitution that the occupying forces have come up with is unworkable

and absurd. It also will saddle the Iraqi people with an enormous and

socialist-oriented government. In this, we are doing the Iraqi people

no favor.

Article 14 of the new constitution grants the Iraqi people the

``right'' to ``security, education, health care, and social security,''

and affirms that `` the Iraqi state . . . shall strive to provide

prosperity and employment opportunities to the people.'' This sounds

more like the constitution of the old USSR than that of a free and

market-oriented society.

Further, this constitution declares that Iraqi citizens ``shall not

be permitted to possess, bear, buy, or sell arms'' except by special

license--denying the right of self defense to the Iraqi people just as

their security situation continues to deteriorate. The Iraqi

constitution also sets up a quota system for the Iraqi electoral

system, stating that women should ``constitute no less than one-quarter

of the members of the National Assembly.'' Is this kind of social

engineering in Iraq on very left-liberal lines really appropriate? Are

we doing the Iraqi people any favors with this approach?

We all praise our troops and support them. Had this bill merely done

that I would have been an enthusiastic supporter. But in politicizing

the issue rather than simply praising the armed forces, I regret that I

cannot support it. Challenging one's patriotism for not supporting this

resolution and our policy in the Persian Gulf, however, is not

appropriate.

We should all be cautious in endorsing and financing a policy that

unfortunately expands the war rather than ending it. That, sadly, is

what this legislation does.