Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of

the United States forces in Iraq. I also salute the troops from 34

other nations who have also fought to liberate Iraq from the clutches

of tyranny and despotism.

Our armed forces have performed with the utmost skill and bravery.

They deserve our gratitude and support. They have not only been

warriors in the heat of the battle and in the fog of war, they have

also served as change agents, transforming upheaval into pace.

However, both time and the facts have proven that we were led into

war with the weapons of mass distortion. We have since learned that our

reasons for sending our troops to Iraq were based on faulty

intelligence.

Assumptions about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction were incorrect.

President Bush admits that the United States has no evidence linking

Saddam Hussein to the 9/11 attacks, despite the Administration's timing

conflating al-Qaeda-led terrorism and Saddam's regime.

Plans for rebuilding Iraq were woefully inadequate, and cost estimate

absurdly low. Rather than catalyzing Mideast peace, the region is again

awash in violence.

The Administration's arrogant dismissal of our allies' concerns has

made it all the more difficult to win their financial and military

support for post-war efforts.

One part of winning the war against terror is proving to the world

that America stands with freedom, champions the weak and aids the

righteous. We are failing in that effort.

The Administration has boasted that America, as well as the world, is

now safer because of the toppling of Saddam Hussein. Twenty-five

million Iraqis will attest to this. While the threat of Saddam Hussein

may be gone, al-Qaeda is still a clear and present danger. As recent

news headlines attest, the people of Spain are reeling from the

dastardly acts of this hydra-headed monster.

The war in Iraq and the intensified conflict in the Middle East has

increased anger at the United States, and people throughout the world

have lost faith in America's foreign policies.

America's foreign policies should be driven by human rights, justice

and equality--values that would decrease the threat to terrorism--and

not by corporate interests.

I agree with this resolution on two points: the Iraqi people have

been courageous and Saddam Hussein was a brutal and dangerous dictator.

A year ago, my constituents demanded answers to their many questions.

How much would a war with Iraq and subsequent occupation cost

taxpayers? How would this be paid for when the federal government is

running large deficits? Will it be worth it? How long will we be there?

All of these questions about Iraq remain unanswered.

I told them that there were no guarantees that we could replace the

current regime with a viable alternative that would bring stability and

peace to the region.

I hoped my grim predictions were wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I would never turn my back on our troops and our

commitments. Our Nation is at war. We do know that the sons and

daughters of all our many communities are engaged in the dangerous and

unpredictable duties that are carried by the Armed Forces in a time of

war. Our military, including overburdened national reservists, are

stretched thin and remain vulnerable to deadly attacks.

Mr. Speaker, Iraq was neither an immediate or imminent threat to the

security of the American people. Iraq's structural integrity did depend

on fear, violence, illicit oil revenue and the illegitimate authority

of one man and the party he led.

But was that enough to justify the more than 565 lost lives of

American soldiers and more than 2000 wounded that will have to return

to their communities where jobs are not available?

Post-war chaos and disorder in Iraq has proven to be just as

destructive to human life as the actual war.

I believe this resolution fails to point out that following the

devastation of World War II, the United States showed tremendous

leadership in the world as we created international institutions and a

framework of international law to prevent war and to sustain and

maintain peace.

We were the leaders in promoting a world where conflicts could be

resolved peacefully and cooperatively. While never perfect, this system

of international institutions has been remarkably effective.

I and many others around the world are shocked and dismayed by the

unilateral, confrontational approach that the Bush Administration has

taken in the world arena.

We must recognize the consequences in the world community of our

rejection of Kyoto, of the International Criminal Court, of the treaty

to ban land mines, and our own withdrawal from the ABM treaty.

We must be mindful about how our criticism of the UN and NATO are

heard throughout the world community.

We have to recognize that after 9-11, the world came together in

solidarity with our loss, working with us to find the perpetrators, to

break up Al Qaeda and to arrest its leaders.

It should have been abundantly clear that fighting terrorism and

protecting American security would require friends and allies;

cooperation, not confrontation.

Yet, the Administration instead engaged in a singled-minded drive to

achieve its Iraqi objectives at a deadly cost instead of developing a

policy to deal with Iraq by working with our allies, by working with

the world community.

Even if the Administration gets what they want this time, what is the

long term damage to our international relationships? How will it impact

our efforts to stop terrorism and protect the security of the American

people?

I am worried. The people that I represent are very anxious. My

colleague from Maine earlier circulated a dear colleague about this

resolution. I would like to emphasize the points he highlighted in his

Dear Colleague:

Mr. Speaker, I believe all of Congress and all of America stand by

our troops, but we think it is absolutely incumbent upon this

Administration to answer our questions instead of debating a resolution

with sound and fury while signifying nothing.