Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Armed Services

Committee, through the years I have had the opportunity to visit and

watch those in uniform as they trained, as they sailed aboard ship. I

have visited with them in difficult places through the years, most

recently in Iraq and Afghanistan. I must tell you how immensely proud I

am of those young men and young women who wear the uniform of the

United States.

We asked for a debate on the issue of Iraq. We were led to believe

that we would be debating and discussing at length the issue of Iraq.

Then the resolution was put forward for us, which we are discussing

today, which is a shotgun blast all across the Middle East and its

problems and terrorism, and a footnote is Iran.

So we should be discussing the future of our young people as they

proceed in Iraq, not everywhere else, because the issue we thought was

before us was that. I must tell you that I take a back seat to no one

in providing for the troops, the young people in uniform and their

families, because their families are so very, very important. Having

members of my family in uniform, I understand the importance thereof.

Sadly, this is not about Iraq. Last year this Congress drafted, and

the President signed into law, words that said calendar year 2006

should be a period of significant transition to full Iraqi sovereignty,

with Iraqi security forces taking the lead for the security of a free

and sovereign Iraq, thereby creating the conditions for the phased

redeployment of United States forces from Iraq.

That is what we should be discussing. It should be narrow,

intellectual discussion, a serious discussion about that country and

its future, full sovereignty transition to their government and how it

is being stood up, how their security forces and Iraqi police forces

are being stood up, and how we are training them and also creating

conditions for the phased redeployment of American forces from that

country.

That is the law of the land, signed by the President, passed by this

Congress. That is in conflict with the resolution before us. As we say

back home, they have done gee and haw together very well. But the law

of the land is what we should be discussing today and all the parts

thereof.

But what concerns me most of all is at the end of the day, what about

the future of our military? Our forces will come out of this effort

seriously strained, both in personnel and in equipment. The equipment

in Iraq is wearing out two to nine times the peace time rate. Some

equipment has added as much as 27 years' worth of wear and tear in the

last 3 years in Iraq. We must continue to fund defense requirements to

meet unpredictable future security needs.