Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to House Resolution

861.

As Americans of good conscience, we can find some comfort in the fact

that Saddam Hussein is on trial for his crimes and that the Iraqi

people have formed a representative government.

Yet, as we, the elected Representatives of the American people,

engage in this discussion more than 3 years after President Bush

declared ``mission accomplished'': 2,500 brave young Americans have

died, over 18,300 have been injured, and more than 10,000 Iraqis have

suffered a similar fate.

Our national treasury continues to be squandered--to date by over

$300 billion, with over $9 billion of reconstruction funds squandered

with no accounting.

And no believable argument has been advanced that our continued

military presence in Iraq will make the American people more secure

against the very real threats that we face in the Global War on Terror.

Tragically, this House is now debating a non-binding resolution that

is as short-sighted and devoid of direction as the President's policy

in Iraq, that purposely confuses the Global War on Terror with the war

in Iraq. And despite the crafty and artful wording of the resolution--

these two efforts are not synonymous. There is no connection between 9/

11 and Saddam Hussein nor Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden.

The President has admitted this, yet the Republican Party in the

House continues to support his failed policies in Iraq under the guise

of fighting terror--consistently providing billions of off-budget

funding, allowing waste, fraud and abuse to go unchecked and failing to

exercise even the semblance of oversight.

Upon close reading, the Resolution contains three different kinds of

declarations.

Some are irrelevant--because everyone believes them to be true.

Some are cynical--because they contain assertions that no one can

reasonably believe.

And some are illusory--because they assert objectives that, based

upon the ``facts on the ground in Iraq'' we cannot reasonably expect to

achieve in the foreseeable future.

The American people and especially the American troops deserve better

than this. We all have unwavering pride for our troops--they are

performing superbly. The quagmire that Iraq has become is not the fault

of the troops--it is the failure of the President to plan for a

transition to the peace.

As a member of the Out-of-Iraq Caucus, I have co-sponsored and

continue to support Representative Murtha's solution, House Joint

Resolution 73.

It makes it clear to the Iraqi people that our Nation renounces any

claim to permanent bases in their country.

It declares that we will bring our troops home at the earliest

practicable date.

And it provides a plan for peace.

Saddam Hussein is no longer the ruler of Iraq.

A reasonably democratic constitution has been ratified.

A democratic government has been elected.

Now, the Iraqi people must forge their own future. Forging their own

future is what 80 percent of Iraqis want--allowing them to do so would

represent true freedom and democracy for Iraqis.

Now, this Congress is duty-bound to heed the reasoned assessments of

American military commanders that we make both Iraqi and American soil

less secure by our continued military presence there. In fact, sadly,

our continued occupation has in fact increased the number of terrorist

operatives in Iraq. Mr. Speaker, with this result it is time to rethink

our ``help'' to the Iraqi people.

The Iraqi people should continue to receive our continued assistance

as they rebuild their country, without our military occupation.

We should help them defend their borders against terrorist

infiltration--if the need arises.

But, it is time for a change. Let's stop the carnage.

It is time to bring our troops home.