Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the resolution

before us today, despite the fact that it barely touches on the war in

Iraq, which is the stated purpose of our debate, and makes some claims

I do not agree with. While I will vote yes, I want to be absolutely

clear that I am doing so to emphatically support our troops and the

bravery they display every day in fighting the war on terror. I did not

vote to authorize the Iraq War and continue to believe it was a

mistake. I do not agree with parts of this resolution that misstate the

original administration arguments for invading Iraq. The heart of this

discussion needs to be that the Bush administration has been almost

totally inept in its planning and prosecution of the war and occupation

of Iraq.

Time and again, the Bush administration has been wrong. Before

invading Iraq, we were told that Saddam Hussein was an imminent threat

to the United States. After attending the briefings provided by the

administration, I did not feel that administration officials made this

case, and the lack of weapons of mass destruction certainly undercuts

this argument. Even worse, we were given a stream of incorrect

assumptions of the costs of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Then-

Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz testified before a Senate

Committee and predicted that the monetary cost of the war to the United

States would not exceed $2 billion. Including money to be appropriated

this year, we are approaching $400 billion, and continue to spend $8.1

billion every month in Iraq. Wolfowitz also said Iraq had no history of

ethnic strife.

It is important to remember that the Bush administration assertions

were not conventional wisdom at the time. Both then-Army Chief of

Staff, GEN Eric Shinseki, and then-Bush economic adviser Larry Lindsey,

soon left their positions after publicly stating, respectively, that

the war would take large numbers of troops and hundreds of billions of

dollars to prosecute.

Further, it quickly became clear that the planning of the occupation

of Iraq was woefully inadequate, placing our soldiers in increasing

danger. Stories of inadequate supplies of bulletproof vests and armor

for humvees documented this fact. The outspoken concern of former

generals in regard to these preparations further underscored the

problems. The intensity of the insurgency caught the administration by

surprise.

The United States has allocated $50 billion to private contractors

for reconstruction and rebuilding efforts in Iraq since the beginning

of the war. Nine billion dollars in reconstruction funds are

unaccounted for, while the Defense Contract Audit Agency has deemed

that $1.47 billion spent by the Halliburton Corporation was excessive

or insufficiently documented. Oil production is at 2.2 million barrels

per day--down from 2.6 million barrels per day prior to the war.

The resolution we are debating also says ``. . . the terrorists have

declared Iraq to be the central front in their war against all who

oppose their ideology.'' This is true only because we gave them the

opportunity to do so. Iraq clearly was not the central front before the

U.S. invasion--another unfortunate outcome of poor planning.

I continue to believe that part of our decision making process

concerning how to move forward in Iraq must include an analysis of how

we got there. It is not enough to say that since we are there, we have

to make the best of it. I agree that we cannot just walk away, and do

not support a certain date for our exit, but we still do not have any

framework for evaluating our progress there. While the death of Al

Zarqawi is great news, and it seems that Iraqi security forces are

taking on more responsibility, does anyone really believe that in one

year, or two years, or even five years, that Iraq will be able to

defend itself?

I said at the outset of this war that the United States was going to

pay the vast majority of its costs, in both lives and dollars, and this

has clearly been the case. We must reengage the international community

to take on more of the burdens of the occupation, and seek to bring our

troops home as soon as possible.

Today, I join my colleagues in celebrating the extraordinary efforts

and accomplishments of our troops. But I do not celebrate our country's

undertaking of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. It was a bad

decision followed by numerous other bad decisions, and while I hope it

ends well, we will feel the ramifications in many ways for years to

come.