Mr. Speaker, the rationale for the Bush administration's

going to war in Iraq has been one of shifting sands.

The first reason given for the action in Iraq was that it was

necessary because Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, which

turned out to be wrong. Then the rationale was the threat of nuclear

weapons from Iraq's alleged purchase of uranium from Africa, which also

was not true and was seriously questioned within the Bush

administration before the military action.

Then it was said that there was a linkage between the Iraqi regime

and the perpetrators of 9/11, a claim that has never been found to be

true. The evidence is that al Qaeda did not have a presence in Iraq

until after the President ordered military action in Iraq.

The Republicans try to paint Democratic opposition to the

administration's Iraq policies as a reflection of refusal to use force.

That is absolutely not true. It is a question of under what conditions

and circumstances. That was at the heart of the debate over Iraq before

the action was taken.

In 2002, a majority of Democrats voted for an alternative resolution

allowing the President to undertake military force in Iraq, but only

after first attempting a multilateral approach to dealing with Saddam

Hussein through the Security Council, just as the first President Bush

did in 1991. What Democrats rejected was implementation of an approach

emphasizing the use of unilateral, pre-emptive military action by the

U.S.

That approach has had a number of consequences: terminating

inspections before the inspectors could fully disclose that there were

no WMD; the twisting of truth about the lack of an Iraqi program of

developing nuclear weapons and the lack of a connection between the

Iraqi Government and 9/11; a belief that military action would not only

be easy to begin with, but would lead to rapid development of a

democracy in Iraq; inadequate equipment to safeguard our troops from

the dire consequences of guerilla and radical insurgent attacks; and a

vast and deep distrust of our Nation among peoples of the Middle East,

Europe and elsewhere.

The situation in Iraq is not getting better. It's getting worse. As

of today, 2,500 American soldiers have been killed in Iraq. Nearly

18,000 of our soldiers have been wounded. Tens of thousands of Iraqis

have died. Iraq is teetering on the brink of a full-fledged civil war.

Sectarian killings have risen rapidly.

This resolution represents a seal of approval of the Bush

administration's approach to Iraq. I oppose it. It is essential that we

change the course, not simply stay the course, and adopt policies that

heighten the pressure to bring about that change and accelerate the

reduction of American military involvement in Iraq.