Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to follow my

friend from California (Mr. Hunter) in supporting this resolution. And

I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. Lantos) and the gentleman

from Illinois (Chairman Hyde) for cosponsoring this, and I am a

cosponsor along with you.

June 30 should be a proud day for the Iraqi people, but one for which

they are continuing to pay a heavy price. Today's coordinated bloody

attacks demonstrate how much of a challenge they still face.

We congratulate the interim Iraqi government on the upcoming

assumption of sovereignty. This is a great step, a real step toward a

permanent government elected by the Iraqi people. I sincerely hope it

works. Lasting peace and political progress will only come when Iraq is

secure. This will remain an ongoing partnership between American forces

and Iraqis for a long time.

I commend our troops; I commend their families. They have given so

much and are feeling the real meaning of sacrifice every day. Deputy

Secretary Paul Wolfowitz confirmed to our Committee on Armed Services

this week that our troops could be in Iraq for years.

We need a plan for our partnership with the Iraqis, to move the

security of their country to them as soon as they are ready. Until

then, I commend this resolution for its reiteration of the full

authority of the U.S. commanders in Iraq over American forces. That is

so important. I feel strongly that we should have a status of forces

agreement. Without it, we need at least a clear statement that our

commanders can do what they must do to protect our troops and

accomplish their mission.

I join my colleagues in congratulating the Iraqi people. I urge

strong support for this resolution.