Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this

time, and it is a privilege to speak on the resolution of two people

for whom I have the utmost respect, the chairman and ranking member of

the Committee on International Relations. I thank them for this

resolution.

I have been in Iraq five times, and four of those times I have been

outside the umbrella of the military as well as being under the

umbrella of the military. I have talked to everyday Iraqis, attended a

wedding, visited schools, hospitals, businesses, met with community and

religious leaders, as well as visited the very poorest of the poor in

their own homes, and slept in Iraqi villages. I cannot tell you how

important June 30 is. There is not an Iraqi I spoke to who did not tell

me they want this to be an Iraqi revolution, not an American

revolution. They are eager to run their own country.

Now, we have made some mistakes. It is clear that we should have

prevented the looting. It is also clear to me we should not have

disbanded the government, the army or the police. Certainly the bad

folks within should have been taken out. So we have made some mistakes.

When you speak to Iraqis, they will tell you they are suspicious of

the United States because to them we are strangers. As good a Nation as

we are, and as important as removing Saddam is, they never had a

government they could trust. So why would they trust a foreign

government to lead them for a year? They blame the United States for

the sanctions, not Saddam, ironically. And they also told me of the

loved ones they lost when we told them to rebel against Saddam, but we

left the Republican Guard in place to kill their loved ones. They ae

angry about this.

They would tell me all those things, and they mean them. But in spite

of their suspicion and anger they are so grateful to be free from

Saddam. The most important decision the President made was to say,

against the opposition of some, on June 30 sovereignty will be passed

to the Iraqi people in an interim government. It is their country, and

they should run their own country and they are eager to do it.

I am so proud to be in the presence of those Iraqis who have taken

the mantle of leadership. If you asked me are their lives in danger and

how likely is it they will be there a year from now, I cannot tell you

with any confidence they will survive. But they are willing to take on

this task in spite of the dangers they face.

So I salute our troops for the 840 men and women we have lost and for

the thousands that have been injured, I salute the Iraqi people, who

have done everything they can to be free people and now have the chance

to run their own country. I particularly appreciate that we have an

opportunity to speak on a resolution that says, uncategorically, on

June 30, the Iraqi people reign. They will run their own country.

Ambassador Negroponte will not be a Mr. Bremer. He is our ambassador

who is there at the invitation of the Iraqi people.

May God bless Iraq, may God bless the United States of America. I put

my hand to my heart in appreciation for what we are doing and with

appreciation and gratitude for the friends I have made with so many

good and brave Iraqis.