

Statement for the Congressional Record

Debate on H. Con. Res. 63

Madame Speaker, I rise in opposition to H. Con. Res. 63, the resolution disapproving of President Bush's plan to send more than 20,000 additional U.S. troops to help secure Iraq.

Our troops have made tremendous sacrifices in waging war against Islamic extremists who not only want to deny freedom to their fellow countrymen, but remain committed to attacking America and our way of life.

We have lost some of the bravest, most dedicated, and committed Americans we have been honored to know, love, and mourn. They deserve the highest honor and respect from this Congress and the American people for their service. Those brave men and women still in harm's way have earned the right to come home as quickly as possible.

However, this does not mean we should abandon the mission and leave Iraq to certain failure by prematurely pulling our troops out. Nor should we cut military funding or adopt non-binding resolutions that embolden our enemies and undermine troop morale.

The Iraqi government needs our assistance to restore security and prevent a descent into anarchy and civil war, or worse yet, a heightened foreign insurgency that results in terrorist control of that nation. The situation in the Middle East is a powder keg that will explode if the United States abandons Iraq.

The resolution under debate today offers no military or diplomatic solutions apart from

expressing disapproval over the plan created by our best military leaders to "surge" over 20,000 U.S. troops into Iraq. This is a bold plan to clear and hold neighborhoods, and restore security to Iraqi civilians. This plan will demand leadership and sacrifice by Iraqi military commanders.

U.S. military advisers will be working closely with Iraqi soldiers. Pentagon leaders tell us that embedding highly trained U.S. troops as advisers to Iraqi military and police units has proven to be one of the best methods to increase the effectiveness of Iraqi security forces.

In anticipation of American withdrawal, Sunni clerics in Saudi Arabia have already expressed support for sending Sunni fighters into Iraq, as have Shiite clerics from other areas of the Middle East, including Iran.

The Jordanian Ambassador described it well by comparing the situation in Iraq to stepping on a landmine. He told me that "As long as the United States is putting pressure on top of the mine, it will not explode, but the moment we step away, it will blow up." This would be catastrophic not only for the Middle East, but also for our nation.

This Congress must not repeat the mistakes of Vietnam. Wars should not be conducted by 535 self-proclaimed "generals." Politicians should not be dictating troop levels or planning missions. Our duty is to conduct effective and responsible oversight while giving our soldiers and military commanders the resources they need to get the job done.

Premature withdrawal or a forced gradual withdrawal from Iraq through funding cuts may appease those opposed to the war, but it would produce bloodshed and sectarian violence far exceeding the level currently reported by newspapers and television.

I am not willing to gamble with the lives of future generations of Americans. This resolution runs away from the best option we have been presented with at this time by our brightest military minds for achieving security in Iraq.

I am open to alternatives, to better plans, including those from our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, but no plans have been offered.

Our nation honors our servicemen and women for their love of country and selfless sacrifices. But we must remember that another generation of Americans will pay the price if we abandon the mission in Iraq and leave that country in chaos and anarchy.

We must give this plan an opportunity to work, or stand by and watch Iraq descend into a terrorist hot-bed so volatile that even greater blood and treasure must be paid by Americans in the future.

If the Majority in this House disapproves of the troop surge, then why are we not debating an alternative plan today? There is no other plan, except withdrawal. The troop surge is the best alternative put forth by our nation's military leaders, and Congress ought to give it an opportunity to work.

I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing this resolution that sends the wrong message to our troops, while granting hope to our enemy that American will abandon the mission in Iraq.

The American people and the men and women fighting in the War on Terror deserve better than a meaningless political statement that offers no solutions to the real and long-term political and sectarian turmoil we are facing in the Middle East.

I will vote "no" on this resolution today, and I hope the majority of my colleagues will join me in opposing it.

Thank you, Madame Speaker.

