

the Administration has failed at every turn to execute the war in Iraq competently. The President rushed to war based on false and faulty intelligence against the protests of the vast majority of our allies. Warnings from U.S. commanders about troop levels and equipment went unheeded, haphazard decisions were made at the earliest stages which seriously damaged our efforts to restore peace and security in Iraq. Our troops have become targets of an ever-strengthening insurgency. This Administration's horrendous judgment has put us in an untenable situation—damaging our ability to deal with other emerging threats around the world and threatening the stability of the Middle East.

The solution to Iraq's problems will be political in nature, not military. The various factions in Iraq need to come together to decide what shape the future of their country will take and to execute that decision. Every diplomatic avenue must be pursued to engage the international community in bringing stability and security to Iraq and reconstructing critical infrastructure. We must assure the Iraqi people that we do not intend to stay in Iraq indefinitely, and that we will redeploy troops in a way that assures their safety and on a schedule pegged to successes in security force training and other criteria. Iraqi security forces must take control of their own country as soon as they are able.

This redeployment must be carried out in a way that does not leave Iraq as a playground for Iran, Syria, and al-Qaeda. It must be carried out at the earliest possible time we are reasonably assured that the conditions exist to ensure redeployment will leave U.S. interests in the Middle East and around the world more, rather than less, secure.

Mr. Speaker, hasty decision-making is what got us into this mess in the first place. The war in Iraq, and the men and women in uniform who are fighting the war, deserve more than ad hoc, 11th-hour debates over political power plays. I urge my colleagues to oppose the resolution.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, this Republican withdrawal resolution was drafted in haste.

No matter how you felt about getting into this war, our kids are there now. They're in the middle of harm's way, right now. As many thousands of families, friends and loved ones can tell you—they've been over there a long time.

I'm a member of the Armed Services Committee. I voted against going to war with Iraq without exhausting all our diplomatic efforts. But here we are. We didn't do that.

I've been to Iraq. I've sat through scores of hearings on Iraq. I've spoken to the Secretary of Defense. I've spoken with our military commanders. Like everyone here tonight, I've lost sleep over it. I've given it a lot of thought. I know my colleagues have too. I know that.

Let's calm down for a second. Let's look at the choice before us tonight.

On one hand, House Republican DUNCAN HUNTER is asking us to withdraw our troops immediately without protection or support. On the other hand, the White House is asking us just to keep our troops on the same course.

I can't choose either of these options in good conscience. Honestly, I don't see how any of us can.

To put it simply, we have more options than "all or nothing" here tonight.

We should be looking for the "better course" not the "same course."

There is no military solution to Iraq. We've got to look to diplomacy and joint civilian-military efforts. This war has demonstrated the need for trained civilian professionals who can provide continuity and hand-in-glove partnerships with Iraqi citizens.

Everywhere I've gone and everyone I've talked to has cited the need for this.

It was obvious early on that the future of Iraq depends on Iraqis. And yet, the administration is only now beginning to place an emphasis on training Iraq's own security forces.

James Fallows of the Atlantic Monthly wrote recently, "an orderly exit from Iraq depends on the development of a viable Iraqi security force. But the Iraqis aren't even close. The Bush administration doesn't take the problem seriously—and it never has."

We have other options besides this draconian resolution. It's too bad we're not able to have hearings on those. It's too bad we're not able to consider these other options tonight.

Ms. SCHWARTZ of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the men and women who are so bravely serving our country in Iraq and around the world.

Our best and bravest continue to perform selflessly and admirably. We owe them our deepest respect and appreciation.

We also have an obligation to provide them, and the American people, with a clear set of objectives, a comprehensive strategy to achieve these objectives, and a roadmap to return home once these objectives are achieved. But, the Bush Administration has not done this.

My colleagues, people all across the country, Republicans and Democrats, want to know why our intelligence was wrong. They want to know why our troops don't have the necessary body armor. They want to know what our objectives are and what progress has been made in achieving them. And, they want to know what concrete steps must be taken to achieve troop withdrawals.

Yet, the Administration's only response to these legitimate questions is to criticize those that ask them as unpatriotic and provide the empty rhetoric of "stay the course". This is irresponsible, morally reprehensible and shameful—to our troops, to the American people, and to our democracy. It demoralizes our mission and is a direct challenge to the freedom and liberty that so many of our troops have fought and died for.

It is Congress's fundamental responsibility to investigate whether faulty intelligence led us to war; to provide our troops with the necessary training, equipment, and supplies; and to ensure that our nation has a clearly defined strategy to achieve success in Iraq and provide for the return of our troops.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that Congress fulfills our obligations. Our troops have shown time and time again that when presented with a challenge, they will achieve it. They have done their part; it is time we do our part.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the sham piece of legislation before us. It is not designed to express the will of the House on Iraq. It is a political stunt intended to avoid a deeply serious, much-needed debate on the most pressing issue facing our country today.

Yesterday, the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. MURTHA, introduced a resolution

calling for the redeployment of American forces from Iraq. The resolution would require us to maintain a sizeable quick reaction force in the region, and to reinvigorate our diplomatic efforts to bring about peace and security for the Iraqi people by truly internationalizing our efforts there.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. MURTHA, has correctly observed that at present, our policy in Iraq "is a flawed policy wrapped in illusion," and that we cannot continue on this present course, because to do so is to court disaster. Based on visits to Iraq, discussion with military leaders there and in Washington, he said that the continued presence of our troops does not advance our security nor that of Iraq. He also said that the American people are way out in front of the Congress on this issue. In all of these things, he spoke the truth.

But in the eyes of the majority and the Bush White House, the gentleman's resolution is, in the words of White House spokesman Scott McClellan "a surrender to the terrorists." They have accused him—as they have others who dare to question their failed policy in Iraq—of being unpatriotic. Sadly, this is a tactic we have seen before. But it is deeply corrosive and it must stop. Every American has the right to question their leaders, period.

There is a reason the majority and the President don't want to be questioned about Iraq. There are several reasons, in fact. This war was started based on faulty and misrepresented intelligence. It has been prosecuted without the number of troops or the amount of equipment that was known to be necessary before it started. And today, it continues without broad international cooperation or an exit strategy. Answering questions about any and all of these is admittedly difficult. But hiding from the answers is not only cowardly, it is irresponsible. I too have visited our troops in Iraq, and they are best served if we face the truth—with the humility that come from recognizing their valor, dedication, and sacrifice.

As the gentleman from Pennsylvania has said, things are not going as advertised in Iraq, and the American people know it. Three years of mistakes and even falsehoods—about the threat Saddam posed, about the ease of total victory, about how Iraqi oil would pay for reconstruction, about the cost to America's military and budget, among others—have finally caught up with this Administration and the Congressional leadership. The gentleman from Pennsylvania offers a plan for getting us out of Iraq strategically, methodically, and successfully. It outlines a way forward for our country to deal with the number one moral and political issue confronting our nation today. We should be debating his proposal, not mocking it.

Meeting the challenge that faces us in Iraq requires courage and honesty. The actions of the majority show neither today. I am sorely disappointed that they have chosen to act so irresponsibly.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, there has never been a time like this in America's history.

Never before has a full-scale assault been launched on Americans who offer a different point of view about the policies of an administration, especially when it concerns a war on foreign soil.

Almost 3 years ago, I went to Iraq as part of a humanitarian delegation. When I said in