

Whether they are in Iraq, In Afghanistan, or here at home, I praise our courageous men and women for risking their lives to defend our country and our freedom. However, I believe that the war on Iraq was unnecessary. I cannot vote in favor of a resolution that commends the President for putting American soldiers' lives in harm's way because of bad policy and misguided decision making.

I will continue to support efforts that support our troops, their families, and our veterans. Each one of them is an American hero and each one of them makes me proud to be an American.

Mr. NUSSLE. Mr. Speaker, Iowans should be proud of the tremendous accomplishments of our dedicated troops over the last couple of years, particularly those serving with Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. These men and women have risked their lives and made sacrifices to keep their country safe and secure.

We should thank each and every one of them, and welcome them home with honor.

Our thanks must also extend to the loved ones of those who serve. Family members do their best to carry on with their lives while they wait, worry, and sometimes watch, what their son, daughter, wife, husband, father or mother is facing on the other side of the world. Some families have been changed forever by tragic loss. Steve and Marilyn Kortheaus of Davenport, Iowa will always miss their son Bradley, a Marine sergeant who died bravely in Iraq in March. They will also be forever proud of him. May they find comfort in knowing he died with honor, and may all of us join them in appreciating the sacrifice he made in the name of freedom.

While our men and women in uniform have accomplished so much in Iraq and in the overall war on terror, important work remains. They may not be in front of us 24 hours a day on television, but it is vital to remember and support those troops still deployed to the Persian Gulf and other areas around the world.

The Ohnesorge family of Dubuque, Iowa is keenly aware that many of our troops remain in danger. Their son, Army Specialist Abraham Ohnesorge, was seriously injured just last week by a rocket-propelled grenade in Iraq.

As members of Congress, we can show our gratitude to Brad, Abraham and the thousands of other troops serving us by providing whatever resources are necessary to defend our nation and win the continuing war against terrorism. It is an unquestioned priority for Iowans and for all Americans. Our armed forces need the newest and best tools available to meet the challenges they face. We should also provide fair and equitable pay, housing and tax policies for members of the military. As House Budget Committee chairman, I take each of these responsibilities very seriously.

The excellent work accomplished in support of both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom by the employees of the Rock Island Arsenal also deserves our gratitude. These dedicated workers rose to the challenge.

Many members of military reserve units and the National Guard were called from the civilian world. The employers and coworkers who support their service should also be commended.

America is blessed to have such well-trained individuals of excellence who are will-

ing to serve not only our interests, but the interests of the entire world. May we see a day when all our troops deployed in the far reaches of the world are home safely with the people they love.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend the members of our armed forces, who serve our country in the most difficult of circumstances. They endure terrible hardships in the course of their service: they are shipped thousands of miles across the globe for everything from border control duty to combat duty, enduring terribly long separations from their families and loved ones.

I believe it is appropriate for Congress to recognize and commend this service to our country and I join with my colleagues to do so. I am concerned, however, that legislation like H. Con. Res. 177 seeks to use our support for the troops to advance a very political and controversial message. In addition to expressing sympathy and condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives in service to our country, for example, this legislation endorses the kind of open-ended occupation and nation-building that causes me great concern. It "recommits" the United States to "helping the people of Iraq and Afghanistan build free and vibrant democratic societies." What this means is hundreds of thousands of American troops remaining in Iraq and Afghanistan for years to come, engaged in nation-building activities that the military is neither trained nor suited for. It also means tens and perhaps hundreds of billions of American tax dollars being shipped abroad at a time when our national debt is reaching unprecedented levels.

The legislation inaccurately links our military action against Afghanistan, whose government was in partnership with Al-Qaeda, with our recent attack on Iraq, claiming that these were two similar campaigns in the war on terror. In fact, some of us are more concerned that the policy of pre-emptive military action, such as was the case in Iraq, will actually increase the likelihood of terrorist attacks against the United States—a phenomenon already predicted by the CIA.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that some would politicize an issue like this. If we are to commend our troops let us commend our troops. We should not be forced to endorse the enormously expensive and counter-productive practice of nation-building and pre-emptive military strikes to do so.

Ms. DEGETTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my support for H. Con. Res. 177, a resolution commending the members of the United States armed forces for their brave and successful actions against the Taliban in Afghanistan and the forces of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. I support this bill because I believe it is important for the U.S. Congress to express its thanks to the tireless men and women of our armed forces. I also believe Congress has an absolute duty to demand that outstanding questions be answered by the Administration about the evidence used to justify a war in Iraq that put our troops in great danger.

The valiant men and women of the U.S. armed forces left their homes and families to take up arms against two tyrannical regimes. Some members of the Reserves were activated for the war and took time away from their jobs—often taking significant cuts in their pay—to contribute to this endeavor. These men and women were given the call to duty, met it confidently, and returned as victors.

Although the United States was victorious in Iraq, our job is far from over. Indeed, some members of our military remain in Iraq, attempting to establish law and order and a true peace. I believe the Administration owes it to the brave men and women of our military and to the American people to answer difficult questions about its justifications for war.

Leading up to the Iraq war, President Bush, Vice President DICK CHENEY, and Secretary of State Colin Powell repeatedly stated that Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction and ties to Al Qaeda posed a direct threat to American national security.

On March 16, 2003, Vice President CHENEY unambiguously told Meet the Press that Iraq had "reconstituted nuclear weapons." Despite American control of Iraq, the United States has found no evidence of an Iraqi nuclear program. Even worse, some of the intelligence cited by the Administration about Iraq's nuclear program has turned out to be fraudulent.

Between January and March 2003, both President Bush and Secretary Powell linked Iraq to Al Qaeda. In the State of the Union, the President warned that Iraq was harboring members of Al Qaeda. At the United Nations, Powell claimed that Iraq was sheltering Al Qaeda lieutenant Abu Musab Zarqawi, proving a "sinister nexus between Iraq and the Al Qaeda terrorist network." No proof has been produced to verify either of these statements.

The lynchpin of the Administration's justification for war in Iraq was the presence of biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction. The President, Vice President CHENEY and Secretary Powell all repeatedly spoke of Hussein's stockpile of biological and chemical munitions. Iraq was described as having such weapons labs across the country. No evidence has been found that Hussein possessed or was producing any biological or chemical weapons, much less the stockpiles asserted by the Administration.

Congress has an obligation to ask questions about the statements made by the Administration to justify the war in Iraq and the Administration has a responsibility to answer them truthfully and honestly. The justifications for war matter. They matter to the men and women of the armed forces, whom we are saluting today, because the Administration used them to destroy a threat it maintains existed against the United States. They matter to the families and friends of those brave men and women who watched as their loved ones shipped off to war. They matter to the American people who are, after all, the final authority in this government.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this resolution to recognize the efforts of those who have contributed to Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Today we recognize and thank those soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and all the individuals in our defense and intelligence communities whose commitment and dedication ensure our continued success. They are members of the greatest fighting force the world has known, representing not only our Nation's strength, but our bravery, skill, honor and resolve. We also thank their families, who so graciously share their loved ones with their country.

Liberty must be guarded and defended, and no nation has given more in this defense than America. Throughout our history, our Nation has been blessed to have individuals willing to