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House of Representatives

Let Us Become a Peacemaking Nation

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER: Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this resolution to grant unilateral authority to the President of the United States for a preemptive strike on Iraq. I cannot believe that the Members of this body are ceding our constitutional authority to this President. And they can give me all the fancy whereases and phrases, and put on the fig leafs, and write all the report language they want, but this is a blank check. This is a Gulf of Tonkin resolution. This is a violation not only of our Constitution but will lead to a violation of the United Nations Charter.

Wake up, my colleagues. Why would anyone vote to do that? That is not our constitutional responsibility. And when we vote on this resolution, will America be more safe? No, I think America will be less safe. We will dilute the war against terrorism. The destabilization of the area will lead to the increased probability of terrorists getting nuclear weapons, say, in Pakistan. The al Qaeda

are probably cheering the passage of this resolution. Now is their chance to get more weapons.

We should not risk American lives. We should be working with the United Nations. We should get the inspectors in there. We should disarm Saddam Hussein. And if they cannot do their work, if the U.N. authorizes force, we will be a much stronger and efficient force working with the United Nations.

Imminent threat. There is an imminent threat. I will tell my colleagues what the imminent threat is, it is our failing economy and the rising unemployment. It is kids not getting a quality education. It is 401(k)s that are down to zero. It is corporate theft. It is the obscene cost of prescription drugs. That is the imminent threat to America, Mr. Speaker. That is what we ought to be working on here.

I have heard all my colleagues on the other side of this issue calling us appeasers, those who are going to vote

against this resolution. We are wishful thinkers. We have our eyes closed. We sit on our hands. And, of course, that phrase, the risk of inaction is greater than the risk of action.

No one on this side, Mr. Speaker, is suggesting inaction. Making peace is hard work. Just ask Martin Luther King, Jr. Ask Ghandi. Ask Nelson Mandela. They were not appeasers. They were not inactive. They were peacemakers. And they changed the history of this world.

So let us not hear talk of appeasement. Let us not hear talk that we favor inaction. We want action for peace in this world, and we want the United States to be part of that action.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there is a whiff of Vietnam in the air. I had a constituent call me and say, "You know, if you enjoyed Vietnam, you are really going to love Iraq." The mail is running 10 to 1

against this war. Protests have already begun around the Nation and around the world.

I say to the President, of course through the Speaker, that you came to office as a uniter, not a divider. Yet we are going round the road of division in this Nation. You can see it, you can smell it, you can hear it, and we are going to hear more.

Let us not go down this road, Mr. President. Rethink this policy. A country divided over war is not a country that is going to make any progress. Let us have a rethinking of this resolution. Let us not vote for a preemptive unilateral strike. Let us work through the United Nations. Let us become a peacemaking Nation. Let us vote "no" on this resolution.