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## Resolution praising U.S. troops angers Dems Measure said war made world safer

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**Washington** -- The House passed a resolution Wednesday praising American troops and the Iraqi people on the Iraq war's first anniversary, but only after partisan wrangling between Bush administration supporters and minority Democrats angered over being shut out of the measure's drafting and opposed to wording saying the war has made the world safer.

The final 327-93 vote after more than five hours of debate masked the angry split in the House. Some Democrats eventually voted for the symbolic resolution even though they objected to pieces of it because they felt majority Republicans had set a trap for them. No amendments were allowed, and some Democrats didn't want to head into November's elections with a vote against the resolution, fearing they would be vulnerable to charges they weren't patriotic and had abandoned America's fighting forces.

In many ways, the debate was a proxy for the competing arguments over Iraq offered by President Bush and Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts, the Democrats' presumptive presidential nominee. The measure also was part of the administration's weeklong effort to highlight the one-year anniversary of the war as a successful U.S. operation.

Republican leaders said the measure was aimed at showing support for the 120,000 U.S. troops in Iraq and for the Iraqi people's efforts to emerge from more than two decades under Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. "Regardless of our disagreement on process, I will ask, dare I say it, in the spirit of patriotism ... let's stand as one with our military people," said International Relations Committee Chairman Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill.

As he does only rarely, House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., took to the floor this time to encourage members to support the resolution and to link a vote against it to the European "appeasement" of Hitler.

"We should never let the terrorists take heart from anything we do on the battlefield or in this chamber," Hastert said.

The Republicans said the invasion had rid Iraq of Hussein's brutal regime, led to a new democratic constitution, started the reconstruction of Iraq's economy, deprived terrorists of a sympathetic state and led such other governments as Libya and Iran to cooperate with international efforts to destroy weapons of mass destruction.

But Hyde's counterpart, Rep. Tom Lantos, D-San Mateo, the Foreign Relations Committee's ranking Democrat, said the White House had misled the world about the intelligence behind the invasion and called for a new independent investigation into alleged manipulation of that intelligence.

Lantos, who on March 2 won a Democratic primary in which he was criticized for helping lead passage of the October 2002 resolution authorizing a war in Iraq, agonized over how to vote Wednesday. His quandary, whether to vote for a resolution honoring the troops despite his misgivings, was typical of many Democrats.

"Many of us in this House who have been committed to, and who have worked for, a bipartisan foreign policy for decades know that this is a slap in our face," Lantos said of the resolution. "The American people have not sent us here just to be an amen chorus for this administration."

In the end, Lantos joined six other Democrats who voted "present," saying they supported the troops but opposed the wording of the resolution.

Citing last week's railroad bombings in Spain and Wednesday's hotel blast in Baghdad, some Democrats said the invasion of Iraq hadn't done anything to make the world safer or advance the war against terrorism. They also criticized the measure for not mentioning the 565 U.S. military personnel killed or the more than 3,200 Americans wounded, or Iraqi civilian casualties, or the need to do more to help U.S. veterans.

"This resolution is a part of a pattern of deception we have seen from Day One," said Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Oakland. "Once again, true debate is being suppressed. What a disgrace."

Lee was blocked from offering an amendment that attacked Bush's doctrine of undertaking pre-emptive attacks in the name of protecting U.S. national security.

The Democratic House caucus, led by Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi of San Francisco, sought to invoke party loyalty on the bill's first vote, the one to approve or reject the rule not allowing any amendments. Republicans prevailed, 228-195, with only two Democrats voting against their caucus.

On the final vote, Democrats were freed by party leaders to vote their consciences. Since the caucus has been divided over the war, Republicans knew they could again count on the minority party to send a divided message.

Pelosi wanted to offer a substitute for the language saying the war had made the world safer. "A final judgment on the value of activities in Iraq cannot be made until Iraq is stable and secure," the suggested amendment said.

She said she would introduce her proposal as a separate resolution, one that is unlikely to ever reach the House floor for a vote.

"With their resolution, the Republicans are in denial as to why we went into Iraq, in denial as to the current state of stability and security in Iraq and are denying our men and women the benefits, the equipment and the quality intelligence that they deserve as they serve our country," Pelosi said.

Republicans said the Democrats were harping on problems for partisan purposes and overlooking significant progress in much of Iraq. They also said Democrats had voted to cut intelligence and military spending, yet now were criticizing shortcomings in those areas.

"The Iraqi people are living in freedom for the first time," said Rep. Jim Saxton, R-N.J. "They know it, and they love it."

"The fact of the matter is there are many success stories ..." he added. "I am proud to stand here today to commend the Iraqi people and to say again to our troops: Thanks for a job well done."

"All too often, the whining from the critics tends to drown out the great success of our troops," said Rep. Randy Forbes, R-Va.

While Pelosi voted against the resolution, her deputy, Minority Whip Rep. Steny Hoyer, D-Md., voted for it. "I'll support it as an expression of gratitude" to U.S. forces, he said. But then he attacked Republicans. "On a matter of highest national importance, the majority has undermined the democratic process."

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#### How they voted

Here are the votes of the Bay Area's House members on House Resolution 557, which supported U.S. troops in Iraq, commended the Iraqi people and praised the war as making the world a safer place. It passed 327-93 with seven members voting "present" and seven not voting.

Eshoo, D-Atherton: no

Farr, D-Carmel: no

Honda, D-San Jose: no

Lantos, D-San Mateo: present

Lee, D-Oakland: no

Lofgren, D-San Jose: no

Miller, D-Martinez: no

Pelosi, D-San Francisco: no

Pombo, R-Tracy: yes

Stark, D-Fremont: no

Tauscher, D-Walnut Creek: no

Thompson, D-St. Helena: no

Woolsey, D-Petaluma: no

Source: U.S. House of Representatives

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