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House of Representatives

Statement of Congressman Ron Kind
In Support of Our Service Men and Women Fighting in Iraq
March 20, 2003

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this resolution commending our brave men and women of the armed services. I wish them Godspeed and a quick and decisive victory so they can return home soon and safe.

America is the greatest democracy the world has ever known, and our most cherished liberty is the right to speak freely. As we raise the banner of democracy in Iraq, we must ensure people across this great land continue to have the freedom to talk about what's happening in our world. Freedom is what our soldiers have gallantly fought to protect since the Revolutionary War, and that's what our brave men and women are fighting to protect today.

In addition, we must start to think forward to the rebuilding effort following this conflict. I believe it is important that we engage the UN as soon as possible and start work on a resolution that structures the reconstruction and interim governance of Iraq under the auspices of the UN. We have the opportunity to unite the United Nations behind an effective, sustained commitment to rebuilding Iraq, including support for democracy and respect for

human rights. Healing the rift in our international relations is important for our national security and maintaining our leadership in the world.

At this time though, with military action to disarm Saddam Hussein just underway, my thoughts and prayers are with the men and women in our military, as well as their families. Over 2,200 members of the Wisconsin Air and Army National Guard are serving on active duty. Our appreciation also goes out to their families and their employers for their support and sacrifice during these challenging times.

I want to particularly express my appreciation to the members and families of the Wisconsin Army National Guards' 229th Engineer Company out of Prairie du Chien and Platteville under the command of Captain Robert Pruitt, the 829th Engineer Detachment out of Richland Center under the command of Captain Kurt Geilfuss, and the 1158th Transportation Company with members from Tomah and Black River Falls under the leadership of First Lieutenant Jason Stebbins, and Army Reserve's 652nd Engineer Company out of Ellsworth under the command

of Captain Dean Kasparek. These units have been activated and deployed overseas.

I also want to thank Major General Al Wilkening, the Wisconsin Adjunct General and Lieutenant Colonel Tim Donovan of the Wisconsin Army National Guard, along with Colonel Mike Staszak, Commander of Fort McCoy Army Reserve Total Force Training Center, and his staff in western Wisconsin. The people of western Wisconsin are proud of their service and the service of all the men and women of our armed services during this important time in our nation's history.

As our military effort continues, I, and other members of Congress will work to ensure that our service men and women have all the resources necessary to fulfil their mission. Again, my thoughts and prayers are with those serving our country, as well as their families. America is firmly behind our troops and we're all hoping to see them home safe, secure and soon.

May god continue to bless the United States of America.