

Then on May 1, earlier this week, the President, joking about it, said, "I was going to start off tonight telling some self-deprecating jokes." And the Republican crowd laughed. And then he said, "But then I couldn't think of any mistakes that I had made to be self-deprecating about."

Now, it is hard to believe that anyone in my State of Ohio who has lost his or her job, 177,000 manufacturing workers in Ohio have lost their jobs since President Bush took office, it is hard to think that any one of them thought that was very funny, that the President could not think of any mistakes that he made; mistakes that he could learn from, that he could correct and do something about.

It is hard to think that any veterans who have seen their benefits cut under this President think this was very funny. It is hard to think that those soldiers who do not have body armor in Iraq because the President and the Pentagon did not plan for it, that they think that is very funny, to say that he could not think of any mistakes. I do not think that too many Americans of the 43 million without health care think that is very funny that the President mentioned he could not think of any mistakes that he had made.

Now, there are a group of us coming to the floor tonight. The gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT), the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER), the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCARELL), the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) and the gentleman from California (Ms. LEE), that are going to talk about some of the mistakes, not to embarrass the President, in some sense not even to criticize the President, but just we hope to point some mistakes out tonight that the President has made so that he can correct them. Because we are all taught as children to learn from our mistakes.

If the President is unwilling to admit a mistake, if the President is unwilling to acknowledge that he even made any, and then if the President is willing to sit around and joke that he has not made any mistakes when we have lost this number of jobs in my State of Ohio and across the country, when our soldiers in Iraq are in harm's way because we have not provided body armor, because we are not providing the armor underneath the Humvees and on the doors of the Humvees to protect American troops, it is not really not much of a laughing matter.

Today the President was in Ohio and, again, the President continued the let us just kind of joke about this.

AP reports, "With humor and sarcasm, President Bush is trying to make JOHN KERRY eat his own words. At every stop of his Midwest bus tour, the President is mocking Kerry to the delight of partisan audiences."

I understand this is a Presidential race. I understand that politicians need to attack each other and make fun of

each other and all of this, but in light of the fact that the President is unwilling to admit any of these mistakes he made, we, tonight, the five or six of us, would like to help him talk about, whether it is a mistakes he made with weapons of mass destruction or Medicare or veterans' benefits or the tax cuts, a millionaire gets \$123,000 in tax cuts; whether it is job loss, whether it is totally forsaking both small business and the manufacturing base in this country.

The entire six Democratic-member delegation of Ohio wrote the President a list of questions as he arrived in Dayton, Ohio today in his Ask the President Forum that he is beginning to hold around the country. He did the first one in Dayton today.

We had some questions for the President about the new Medicare bill because we recognize that the Medicare bill was a mistake. First of all, the President allowed the drug companies and the insurance companies to write the bill. He also allowed the drug companies, that are going to make \$150 billion additional profits from that bill. The insurance companies will get a \$46 billion direct subsidy from this bill. But no surprise there, the President has already received tens of millions of dollars from the drug and the insurance industry for his election.

In fact, the word in the street in Washington, my colleagues and I have all heard, is that the President will receive a total of \$100 million from the drug industry for his reelection. Of course, he is going to support the drug industry. But, frankly, we consider that a mistake, when you write a Medicare bill that helps the drug industry, it helps the insurance industry, and then maybe you get around to dropping a few dollars for seniors.

When they release this prescription drug discount card today, we asked the President a couple of questions. Is it true the Medicare law allows drug and insurance companies offering discount cards to change covered drugs and discounts weekly? Does this not mean that seniors may choose a card one week that will be worth little or nothing to them the next?

In other words, seniors sign up for one of these discount drug cards. If you sign up for one of the 50 or 60 or 70 cards, you are stuck with it the entire year, even though the drug discount card company can turn around and take your drug off the list, can raise the price, can cut your discount.

Mr. Speaker, the President also mentioned in this bill, this Medicare bill, there is also a prohibition on drug companies, on the government negotiating cheaper prices. We know we can get cheaper drugs in Canada, yet the President will not allow it. Something is wrong. I wish the President would acknowledge his mistake. Go back to the drawing board and write a drug bill for the seniors, not for the drug companies.

MISTAKES OF THE PRESIDENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, let me first thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) for organizing tonight's series of statements about the consequences of the Bush administration's tragic and terrible decisions.

Now, last month, the President stated that he could not really think of a single particular mistake that he had made in office, though he conceded that he must have made some. Even worse, the President was either unable or unwilling to say what lessons he had learned from the process.

Now, tonight some of us are here to talk about the administration's decisions because, quite frankly, "mistake" is far too soft a word. It almost makes it sound like an accident. We are also here to talk about the consequences and the lessons that the entire world is learning from this administration.

Now, in the newspapers and on television in the past week we have all seen the horrifying pictures of American soldiers torturing, tormenting and humiliating Iraqi prisoners. We all know that this does not characterize the tens of thousands of brave men and women serving in Iraq, but we do note that it endangers their lives.

These pictures are horrifying, both because of the callous disregard for human rights that they show by individual American soldiers but also for the far more fundamental failures at the highest levels of leadership, failures that began with an administration that led the Nation to war under false pretenses.

The pictures are also horrifying for their consequences. What will happen to the next American soldiers or civilian captured? If we, the world's most powerful military country and greatest democracy, will not abide by the Geneva Convention and international law, then who will?

What will happen to our already devastated international reputation?

The Washington Post today reports that the State Department's Intelligence and Research Department is deeply concerned about a cascade of international criticism that could seriously affect our broader foreign goals.

Leaked portions of a 53-page report by Major General Antonio Taguba completed in February conclude that there were numerous, numerous instances of "sadistic, blatant and wanton criminal abuses at Abu Ghraib" prison.

I hope that this is not just the tip of the iceberg.

Individuals involved have stated that they were encouraged by military intelligence to engage in this abuse. Now, as one who has a background in psychology and mental health, I worry for our young men and women in uniform who are being dehumanized, dehumanized by a war that allows them to cross this threshold.

Now, many of the men and women and teenagers held in this prison, actually, the infamous prison which was known as a torture center for Saddam Hussein, they were picked up in random sweeps and at highway checkpoints.

People were held for months on little or no evidence, with no charges, no change at appeal, and now, it seems, in addition to that potentially widespread injustice, they may have been abused or even tortured.

The Department of Defense is investigating these charges, but he oversights quite frankly must be broader and the questions that are asked must be more sweeping. Congress absolutely has to exercise its oversight authority through a full scale investigation, a Congressional investigation.

Part of this examination also has to look at private contractors, some of whom will be running these prisons and some of whom are allegedly involved in these terrible acts. Human Rights Watch and other organizations have widely asked about the role of private contractors who seem to be operating entirely outside the boundaries of authority in a complete legal vacuum. They are exempt from prosecution by Iraqi courts. They are beyond the military chain of command and its court-martial authority, and they are outside the range of the United States courts.

This is one more consequence of turning over so much power and so much money to private contractors. This is one more example of a foreign policy and a military policy gone wrong. The United States has turned this prison especially, Abu Ghraib into a house of horrors. That failure is a metaphor for a foreign policy that has gone absolutely and tragically wrong. Our Nation is perceived in many circles as waging war on Islam. The pictures in the world's newspapers will only compound and confirm that perception. Those photographs build on an image of a Nation that ignores the United Nations, when it chooses to, of course, and turns to it when it gets in trouble.

They add to a portrait of a country that preaches about human rights but fails to uphold them. The pictures are just one more piece of evidence that this administration led our Nation to war without really a plan for its aftermath. And that utter failure, as I said, "mistake" is far too soft a word.

This policy has contributed to more than 500 American deaths since, mind you, since President Bush landed on that aircraft carrier and stood underneath that banner proclaiming "Mission accomplished."

Exactly what mission have we accomplished? We have not found any weapons of mass destruction, but we have seriously damaged our international credibility. We have not established any semblance of stability or safety in Iraq, although the deadline for the supposed Iraqi takeover of authority is just a month away.

We have not promoted the cause of democracy in the Middle East or anywhere else, but we have undermined the rule of international law.

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We have not built a strong network of friends and allies to advance our joint goals, but we have squandered the enormous goodwill that the world stretched out to us in 2001. Ultimately, we have not made the world or ourselves safer. The policies of the Bush administration have made the world a far more dangerous place.

Tomorrow, the State Department issues its annual report on U.S. efforts to support human rights and democracy across the globe. Just what is this report going to say about the Bush administration's failures in Iraq and its efforts to overthrow democracy in Haiti? Just what is this report going to say about the abuse of individuals and organizations?

ADEQUATE PROTECTION FOR OUR TROOPS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COLE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being recognized.

Mr. Speaker, as my friend, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), said earlier, in a press conference recently on the 13th, the President was asked if he could identify any mistakes he may have made, and he was unable to do so.

I can tell him a mistake that he and his administration has made. They sent our young soldiers into harm's way when the war in Iraq began without adequate body armor. That is the truth. They cannot escape that fact. There were soldiers who were placed in harm's way without having the protection of this basic equipment.

The war began in March. I have written Secretary Rumsfeld over the last year two letters asking him to explain to me and to the American people why our soldiers were placed in harm's way without this protection.

This body armor that I am talking about became available, I think, for the first time in 1998. It is called the "interceptive vest." It is made of Kevlar with ceramic plates in both the front and the back. It is so effective that it can stop an AK-47 bullet, and it has been credited with saving the lives of many of our soldiers who had them and could use them.

When we went into Iraq, after literally months during which we could have prepared to have had adequate equipment for our troops, we sent our soldiers into battle without this protection; and Mr. Speaker, it took Mr. Rumsfeld and the Pentagon, and, yeah, the buck stops in the Oval Office, the President, one full year from March when the war began until March of this year before they were able to send me

a letter informing me that, at last, all of our troops were equipped with this body armor.

I asked how many young men or middle-age Reservists and Guardsmen may have lost their lives needlessly simply because this administration did not provide them with this basic protection. It is a question that I think needs to be analyzed and answered.

There is a continuing problem in the war zone. As I stand here in the Chamber of the people's House tonight, there are American soldiers in Iraq, in various cities in Iraq, who are using vehicles without proper armor. There is one company that the Pentagon has a contract with to provide up-armored Humvees for our military personnel. It is located in Fairfield, Ohio. It is called O'Gara-Hess and Eisenhardt. It is the company that has the ability and the contract with the Pentagon to produce these vehicles which provide a high degree of protection when our soldiers may drive over a roadside bomb, for example; and yet the Pentagon is only contracting for 300 of these up-armored Humvees per month, although thousands are needed in Iraq.

The company tells me that they are capable by November, if not sooner, of producing some 500 of these Humvees per month. What that means is if the President and the Secretary of Defense and those who make decisions regarding this matter at the Pentagon were willing to do so, they could have these up-armored vehicles in Iraq so that our troops would be protected much more quickly than they are willing to do.

I do not understand this. I simply do not understand why the President does not call Secretary Rumsfeld up and say, listen, there are reports that our troops need up-armored Humvees; I want this problem solved as quickly as possible. Do everything necessary; move heaven and Earth but get this problem solved.

A young West Point graduate from my district called me a few weeks ago. He had returned after spending 14 months in Iraq; and he said, Congressman, the Explorer you drive around is more armored and offers better protection than did the Humvee that I drove around the streets of Baghdad.

It troubles me that those of us who serve here in this Chamber and the President, who is the Commander in Chief, would allow this situation to continue when they can do something about it.

So if the President cannot think of any mistake he has made, I would offer this mistake. I would say to the President, you should not have sent our soldiers into battle without body armor, and you should not have our soldiers over there tonight without up-armored Humvees to provide them adequate protection.