

the path of freedom. I thank the gentleman for his comments.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, we are out of time. We would like to yield back the balance of our time.

IRAQ WATCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GINGREY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, as you know, and our friends know, we have been engaged in a conversation for some months now with regard to what we have come to term the Iraq Watch; and I was very pleased to note that my good friend and esteemed colleague, the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), indicated in the last hour that he and other Members were occupying, that they would be pleased at some point, perhaps in the future, to work out an opportunity for a dialogue, not necessarily a debate, but a conversation among friends with respect to Iraq and its implications for the United States, perhaps even combining hours. I do not know what the rules are precisely on that, and I do not ask for a ruling on that right now, Mr. Speaker; but at some point we hope to be able to do that, hopefully for the benefit of the membership and for those members of the American public and others that may be tuning in to our Special Orders.

For this evening's opportunity, however, I wanted to begin our discussion tonight with some references and observations over the so-called handover of sovereignty. I think, Mr. Speaker, you might agree that with respect to Iraq, and unfortunately not only Iraq, there tends to be opportunities for the media in particular to seize on certain phrases. They become almost phrases of art. These phrases then substitute for a whole panoply of analysis that might otherwise usefully take place.

In this instance, the phrase that I am referring to is the so-called "handover of sovereignty." Handover of sovereignty, what that means is not clear to me at this stage.

What I did observe during our break was a ceremony which took place under very, very strained circumstances. The television news was suddenly filled with the ominous music, the drumbeats, the portentous rhythms that seem to indicate that something of spectacular import is about to happen. Breaking news. Stentorian voices, a sound, and then suddenly we are told, well, we are going to go to the handover of sovereignty in Iraq. It is to take place in secret. It is to take place with a pool reporter there, apparently a pool camera. It is in some secret room somewhere in the green zone, presumably, I guess, in one of the palaces, or what are referred to as palaces, in Baghdad; and, suddenly,

there is Ambassador Bremer and some folks there with handshakes and pieces of paper passed back and forth. No real idea of what it is all about other than smiles and handshakes all around.

And suddenly sovereignty ostensibly has been transferred or handed over. That it took place in secret, that it took place ostensibly to prevent terrorist activity from disrupting it probably speaks more about what the handover was actually all about and whether or not the word "sovereignty" might properly apply.

In both instances, I think not. There was no handover of sovereignty. How can there be sovereignty when you do not control your armed forces, when the first pronouncements of your ostensibly sovereign government involve the possibility of imposing martial law on your own people and indications that the governing authority, that is to say the Coalition Provisional Authority under Mr. Bremer, still absent him in person, is going to be in charge of the military activities, presumably, according to this handover of sovereignty ceremony, under some kind of group discussion terminology.

Again, I fail to understand exactly how this "partnership," which was referred to between the so-called sovereign Government of Iraq and the Government of the United States through its military, is supposed to take place.

It is unclear to me that the questions that I asked of Assistant Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz in our Committee on Armed Services hearings, unclear to me whether these questions were answered. I simply said, "Who is in charge? Who has the authority?" And what I got was the usual dissembling and allusions to the idea of group discussions taking place. I am not quite sure how one responds to military situations in the arena of group discussions, but I suppose it is possible.

My own thought at that time was, and I said at that time and repeat again tonight, that my perception was that at the turnover of sovereignty, at least as best I was able to understand that term, the American military would be set adrift on a desert sea and would find itself in a situation of being the first responders in an Iraqi crisis and that we would be uncertain as to who exactly was issuing the orders and under what circumstances they would be obeyed.

This constitutes, for me, a crisis of another character, a crisis for us to answer; and in that context it is clear to me that the handover of sovereignty amounts to little more than a propaganda device meant to try to distance the political consequences and implications of our occupation from the political realities as the election approaches.

Obviously, people will have to make their own minds up on that score; but in relation to that then, among the first pronouncements of this sovereign government was that under consider-

ation was a possible policy of amnesty and that the amnesty would extend to those people who had murdered American troops, those people who had been involved in the insurgency that has taken place since the hostilities or major hostilities were pronounced at an end, i.e., mission accomplished by Mr. Bush some time ago on the infamous aircraft carrier stunt.

And subsequent to that, obviously this insurgency, again, this is a term that has been adopted by the media uncritically, has resulted in numerous deaths and wounding. Most members of, certainly, the Committee on Armed Services and other Members of the House of Representatives and members of the subcommittees of the other body have traveled both in their districts and here in Washington and in Germany to hospital situations where we have been able to speak with and, hopefully, bring some measure of comfort and support to members of the military who have been wounded, members of the military and others, including civilian employees. But all that has taken place since this pronouncement that the war was essentially over, that the major activities surrounding the invasion was over; and now we find that this sovereign government is contemplating offering amnesty to those people.

Now, if that is in fact what this has come to, I think the implications and consequences are serious indeed. There is no question in my mind that there will be some very serious dialogue taking place in this Nation if that is what this was all about, the opportunity for a government that has come into being solely as a result of the activities of the United States of America subsequent to the invasion, including and subsequent to the invasion of Iraq; and now we find a general amnesty being contemplated.

That was never discussed, to my knowledge, with any members of the Committee on Armed Services. It was never discussed, to my knowledge, with members of the subcommittees of Congress generally as to whether or not that was something that we could abide. One would think that at a minimum this sovereign government in Iraq would have the courtesy, if only out of respect for those who have died and those who have been wounded on their behalf, to at least engage in some form of a dialogue with the United States in regard to that possible amnesty.

I see my friend from Washington is about to ask for the floor, and I would be happy to yield to him.

Mr. INSLEE. Well, I appreciate this, and I would like to contrast the phony, alleged sovereignty in Iraq with the real sovereignty and democracy in the United States; and this is a thought I had while sitting on the West Lawn of the Capitol watching the fireworks that were so spectacular on July 4th over the Washington Monument. And as I was looking at the fireworks, I was

thinking about some of our work on the Iraq Watch, because the thought struck me that the reason we became a democracy, and such a strong one, is we had people who were rebellious and questioning and demanding against their government.

We had a bunch of people in the 18th century who were rebellious to King George, who abused the trust that this monarch had of his people, who was not honest with his people, who was fraudulent with his people, that got his people into difficult positions without their consent. And the thought struck me that that rebellious, demanding, questioning attitude that the patriots had that started this country is the same attitude of folks who are questioning this President who has not told the truth about the American people that started this war; and we ended up a sovereign country because we are demanding.

And I just note that as a theme tonight of our Iraq Watch that we demand the truth from our government, and the truth is that this phony allegation of sovereignty in Iraq is what I might call rose petal number 512, because this entire Iraq policy has not been based on reality. It has been based on a series of rose petals. Number one was we were told by Mr. Wolfowitz, rose petals literally would be strewn at our feet. Rose petal number two is when we were told that when we just caught Uday Hussein, the insurgency would stop. Then we were told when the other Hussein brother was caught, the insurgency would stop.

Rose petal number 300, I think was when they said Saddam was caught, the insurgency would collapse. Rose petal number 412 was when they said all of these people who are doing violent acts in Iraq, they are just a bunch of foreigners, and as soon as we get the foreigners out, it is not the Iraqi people who were upset we were running their country, it is just these people from Syria.

Turned out yesterday we found, like, 5 percent of the people in our custody are outside of Iraq. The problem we have got is some Iraqis we are battling with are another rose petal. And this is the ultimate rose petal that this administration is trying to foist on us, the American people, that unfortunately is not going to work. We lost three Marines today following the "sovereignty" rose petal.

The fact is we have got to face reality in Iraq. This administration has never faced reality in Iraq. This administration has consistently given us misinformation; and until this administration changes its attitude, or the people in the White House change, we are going to be in trouble in Iraq.

You know, look at the situation. We keep hearing about, oh, there is nothing but good news in Iraq, about all these rebuilding programs, and we have people who are working very hard, people in the military are working hard. I am sure some of the people at Halli-

burton are working hard, too. It is too bad they are charging us twice as much for meals as they are supposed to be, but I am sure they are working hard.

□ 2115

But when an assessment was done, I believe by the GAO, they found that less than 2 percent, less than 2 percent of the reconstruction projects that we voted in October to fund have been done; 140 out of 2,300 reconstruction projects have been done. Electricity is still not working in Baghdad as much as it was for the average person before the war.

Yet we continue to get these rose petals that the administration tries to feed us, and it is this type of attitude based on falsehood and mysticism that have got us in this problem.

Mr. HOEFFEL. If the gentleman will yield, I certainly respect and agree with the comments of the gentleman from Washington. This sovereignty in Iraq does seem like a false sovereignty, when you realize the facts on the ground.

Number one, this new Iraq government has no ability to protect itself or its citizens or defend against the violent insurgency. All of the security requirements remain on American troops, approaching 140,000 American troops, and the sad fact is we have yet to stabilize that country. We have not been able to contain the insurgency.

The highest suggested number of people in that insurgency, the highest estimate is 10,000, and 10,000 violent insurgents have not been controlled, cannot yet be contained by 140,000 brave American troops. The reality is we do not have enough troops to stabilize Iraq; we have not had enough; we do not have the international troops; and we do not have the Arab League troops that we should have.

This new sovereign government does not seem so sovereign. They are also not in control of their own reconstruction. The \$20 billion of American funds appropriated by this Congress for reconstruction, the gentleman is absolutely correct, has not yet been spent, and, when it is spent, it will be controlled by the American embassy. This is probably the right thing, because it is American dollars, but it is an all-American list of contractors, many of them picked with no-bid contracts, no-bid awards, like Halliburton, and the so-called sovereign government of Iraq will have no control over that money.

Thirdly, they were talking the other day about delaying elections. The White House said no, you are not. We are going to have elections, whether you are ready or not, in January of 2005.

I do not want to see elections delayed either. I would like to see them moved up even sooner. But here is this Iraqi sovereign government that does not control its own security, does not control the reconstruction in Iraq, cannot even decide when to have elections, and yet the President wants to continue

this fiction that we have established a sovereign nation of Iraq.

It has not happened yet because we do not have security. Fundamentally we do not have security. We cannot meet our shared goals. I think every member of the Iraq Watch, today and for the last 15 months we have been doing this, has agreed with the President's goals of a stable, peaceful Iraq that is pluralistic and hopefully democratic. None of those goals can be reached without security. We cannot have reconstruction without security; we cannot have a sovereign nation under a new government without security; we cannot have elections without security.

This President has been unable to attract the international troops, the NATO troops, the Western European troops, the Arab League nation troops, that clearly need to be added to our brave American troops to get up to the several hundred thousand troops that Army Chief of Staff Shinseki quite rightly said a year and a half ago would be needed.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I think Secretary Powell, as it was reported in the book just recently released by the Pulitzer Prize winner Bob Woodward, my memory of the quote is that if you go to Iraq, Mr. President, you own it.

Well, the truth is, we do own it. I was interested in hearing from our colleagues and friends on the other side of the aisle, particularly the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, when he acknowledged that it is really the American soldier that is doing the work today in Iraq. Yes, we have allies there, the British obviously have made a commitment and there are some Australians, but other than that, there are very few substantial commitments to preserving security in Iraq today.

As our colleague the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) just noted, we hear from some quarters that everything is fine, and we know that is not true. I think it is important that the American people understand that we are far past making this a partisan issue. This is not about Republicans and Democrats, this is truly about the direction of where this country is going, and it is absolutely essential that we be clear and honest and forthright with the American people.

Let me just quote one very famous, highly regarded, well-respected traditional conservative, William Buckley. We all know William Buckley. He certainly has contributed through the years to discourse, to the public discourse on major issues in this country. As we all know, he recently resigned, retired, if you will, from the publication that he brought forth many years ago. But even a traditional conservative Republican like William Buckley expresses amazement about what is occurring in terms of the stories and the fantasy that is coming from this administration, particularly the White House.

He recently said that the White House has a dismaying capacity to believe their own PR, and until we finally acknowledge what the reality on the ground is, we cannot have a debate.

I am always brought back to that very famous statement by David Kay. Now, David Kay, as we all know, and as I am sure many who are listening to our conversation tonight are fully aware, was a former United Nations inspector, an American, who earned an excellent reputation for integrity, for knowledge, during the work done by the United Nations in terms of ensuring compliance by the Saddam Hussein regime with a variety of United Nations sanctions relative to the weapons of mass destruction.

Prior to the war, he stated that he was convinced, from what he heard from the administration, that in fact the Iraqi government possessed weapons of mass destruction. He was assigned by this administration, by this President, to lead a group to go to Iraq and conduct a survey and do a thorough, exhaustive, extensive search for those weapons of mass destruction.

When he came back, he made that famous statement before a Senate committee, saying we were all wrong, and here it is depicted on the cover of Newsweek Magazine. And as time has gone on, he continues to express his concern that we are losing our credibility in the world and that our role, our prestige, our claim to moral authority is eroding on a daily basis, and he pleads with the administration to come clean.

So let me just suggest that until that occurs, that until there is honesty on the part of this White House and frankness and candor, and not just simply press releases and flyovers of Baghdad, we all know that our troops are doing a job that reflects well, not only on them, their families, but our country, but the truth is too that their morale has eroded. And yet we never hear anything from this White House and this administration about that reality, about the reality that a survey was done by Stars and Stripes, a military magazine, that established that 52 percent of Army personnel describe morale as low.

That is dangerous. Let us respect them for what they do, let us acknowledge their heroism, but let us not paint an unrealistic picture, or we do the American people and the American military a disservice.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I wanted to yield to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON).

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Hawaii, and most of all I want to thank the esteemed Members who have participated week in and week out in the Iraqi Watch. I think you do a service to the country.

As the gentleman from Massachusetts was saying, our troops have performed extraordinary under unbeliev-

able circumstances. I, like many of you, have traveled to the Middle East three times, twice to Baghdad in the last 9 months. I can recall vividly when Tommy Franks was before our committee and I asked him about the policies of preemption and unilateralism and how he felt about that. The general paused and looked at me and said, "Well, Congressman, that is above my pay grade." He says, "But we have long learned in my service to the country that we are able to distinguish between those who wave the flag in Washington and those who have to salute it and follow orders."

As the Iraqi Watch has done throughout this, commending our troops for their valiant effort, but as our leader NANCY PELOSI says, our troops in many respects need policies that are worthy of our sacrifice. It is clear to me that the Pentagon, the civilian Pentagon's ideological reach has exceeded our military grasp and has, as has been pointed out here this evening, has placed our men and women in harm's way.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURTHA), a valued colleague of ours, in describing the ongoing turf battle between the Department of Defense and the Department of State, concludes that there were plans that were separately conceived, poorly coordinated, based on false assumptions, poor intelligence and outright lies from Ahmed Chalabi, that have placed our men and women in the situation that we find ourselves today.

Because of your nightly efforts, and I assure you, people in my State of Connecticut and throughout my district, the First Congressional District in Hartford, have heard. I have conducted several forums back in my district, and I find them incredibly informative in the sense that people want to come out and speak out about this issue, because, as the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) has pointed out, this is not a partisan issue. This is about the soul of the country and who we are and what direction we plan to go. And it is important, as the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) said earlier this evening, that we have this open dialogue and debate, a real dialogue with the American people, about our future, about our brave men and women, and how we intend to proceed now that we find ourselves in this quagmire called Iraq, moving forward.

Yes, it can be acknowledged that it was a good thing to be rid of Saddam Hussein.

□ 2130

But in traveling to the Middle East and talking to Ambassador Jordan in Saudi Arabia a year before the outbreak of the war, he warned prophetically that if we unilaterally and preemptively strike Saddam Hussein, that what we will do is unwittingly, unwittingly accomplish what Osama bin Laden failed to do and create a united Islamic jihad against the United

States. We find that our brave men and women now who are over in Iraq are faced with people pouring over the borders answering the call to jihad.

The United States has to proceed in a manner, as the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. HOEFFEL) pointed out, that allows us to stand up, in as timely a fashion as we possibly can, the Iraqi Army, civil defense, and police. But as the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) also points out, if the Iraqi people do not embrace democracy as much as we want them to, it is up to them ultimately to embrace this democracy. And if our presence there only inhibits that, then there has to be an ongoing examination and dialogue of an appropriate exit strategy for us that is strategic in its thinking.

Tactically, the United States and our men and women who wear the uniform have performed brilliantly, but we have not strategically had a plan that will allow this government to stand up the way all of us want to see it happen.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming the time, on that note of our analysis of what the domestic questions are that need to be answered in Iraq, it is probably appropriate that the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) comes to us at this time, because if anybody is in the heartland of where domestic issues are in the forefront, I would say that it is the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND), his district and his State; and I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Hawaii, my friend, for yielding; and I want to thank each of my colleagues for talking about this important subject.

I do come from Ohio, the heartland of our country. I have so many veterans in my district, people who are intensely patriotic, people who honor our country by service, and they have historically. The people in my district are concerned. They are concerned about the continuing deaths that are occurring in Iraq. Well over 850 of our American soldiers have now lost their lives. Many thousands, 4,000 seriously injured, many more injured with less serious situations.

But the fact is that we just went through the celebration of the 4th of July; and throughout my district as I went to parades and festivals and celebrations, I talked with a lot of veterans. Many of these guys are old World War II guys. They know what war is like. Many of them are so deeply troubled by what is happening to our soldiers. The fact that we sent them to battle without adequate equipment, the fact that even tonight, I would emphasize as we stand here in the safety and security of this hallowed hall of the House of Representatives, we have American soldiers in Iraq and they are continuing to drive unarmored Humvees well after more than a year, certainly, when they should have been equipped.

So as was said earlier, the planning that went into this war was so inadequate and inept and, quite frankly, the immaturity of the decisionmakers. I am talking about from the Vice President on down to Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz and Richard Pearl and others. They were so naive. These folks who were so intent on sending our young men and women into battle; had these assumptions that were so inadequate and incorrect and, as a result, we sent soldiers to battle without adequate equipment, without adequate planning; and it is a tragic result, an absolute tragic result. Every precious life that has been lost affects families, children, spouses, moms and dads, aunts and uncles, and the community that that person has come from.

It just seems to me that we have an administration that somehow does not understand what is happening. Maybe it is because they know of no one who is personally involved. It has been pointed out that out of the 435 Members of the House and 100 Senators, that only one of us, out of the 535 of us, only one of us has a son who is an active duty soldier engaged in this conflict. So many of us who serve here do not know anyone who is a soldier in Iraq or in Afghanistan. We do not know of anyone who has lost a son or a daughter. So it seems to be something that is removed.

I would like to say just one thing before I yield to my colleagues, and I say this to the parents in my district; and I think the parents across this country need to be aware of this. We are now calling up soldiers for further duties who have already fulfilled their contractual obligation as soldiers, and the reason we are doing that is that our military is spread so thin. What would we do if there was an episode that resulted in the overthrow of the regime in Saudi Arabia, for example? What would we do? We do not have the soldiers we need to meet our obligations.

Many parents who listen to these proceedings here in the Chamber may not feel personally involved in this war effort. They may feel like that is the President's decision, and we are going to trust the President. But if they have children, 14, 15, 16, 17 years of age, they should be paying attention, because if this administration continues in office and does not change its policies, I think it is inevitable that we will have a mandatory military draft.

Now, I think that is a fact of life. The President may not want to admit it. The Secretary of Defense may not want to own up to it. But I think the facts are that we cannot continue to meet our military obligations without a military draft under the policies that are being pursued by this administration.

So the moms and dads in this country who have children may ought to pay attention.

I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT).

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, the evidence that supports that premise is

the reality that within the past week or two there has been a call-up of the so-called "ready reserve," almost 6,000. Now, these are men and women who performed for their country, who obviously did their active duty, did their active reserve, have returned to civilian life, and in some cases for years have been civilians, and now, out of the blue, they are back into the active military on their way to Iraq.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, because just before I came back, let me give my colleagues something so that it is not abstract. I will tell my colleagues exactly what I had to deal with and what came up while we were away on our holiday.

My staff representing my delegation was briefed by Major General Lee, the adjutant general of the State of Hawaii, on the situation of the 29th Brigade, Hawaii Army National Guard. The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Army approved the alert of the 29th Brigade for deployment to Iraq. Earlier indications were, of course, that the 29th would be deployed to Afghanistan; but the situation on the ground in Iraq now requires additional soldiers from the 120,000 now there, and the enhanced 29th Brigade is needed.

Now, this is happening all across the country; and if anybody thinks for a second that the 5,000 or 6,000 that are going to be involved in this current recall-up, involuntary call-up is going to solve it, I think they are dreaming.

The 29th is one of the two remaining National Guard brigades not yet activated. It will perform reinforcing missions.

Remember when I indicated here before that when this so-called sovereignty occurred, the United States military would be set adrift on a desert sea.

They will perform reinforcing missions, whatever in God's name that means. The expected deployment will be 12 months. The brigade will have to travel off-island to train up, because the normal training entity, the 25th division, of course, is now deployed itself. The brigade may go to Fort Bliss, et cetera; expect the deployment to Iraq to take place shortly.

Then what do we have to do? The adjutant general then had to brief all of the mayors that once the alert notice was released in Washington, we had to then discuss what the impact would be on homeland defense and natural disaster impacts back in Hawaii, because the Guard normally is going to address those situations. The National Guard is, of course, the primary backup to civilian authority. Now we are going to have to rely on the Air National Guard since most of the Army National Guard is going to be deployed. Now, this is just in Hawaii.

Now, we can imagine what is taking place elsewhere all around the country? Part of our problem area in Hawaii is that the police and fire departments are going to be adversely af-

fected because a major portion of the Army guard are police officers and firefighters and teachers. So there will be about 2,500 soldiers from Hawaii and about 3,500 coming from American Samoa, Guam, and California. Now, that is just one instance; and that is the reality.

I want to conclude by saying the impacts on this are considerable, because the employers, whether they are public employers or private employers, have to take into account the absence of these folks at this particular time. What is happening right now is we are denying what the realities of the necessities for troops are in Iraq and Afghanistan and are masking it over with Guard and Reserve deployments; and we are going to have to pay a fearful price for that.

I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to ask the question why we are in this fatal, mortal, disastrous situation in Iraq. Why are we in this situation where we are calling up people whose military service was essentially over? Why? We have put two of the training brigades that act as the enemy at various forts around this country, they pose as the enemy, and that is why we have such a well-trained Army. We have three of those Army units, and two of them have now been sent to Iraq to fight the Iraqi insurgents. We are not training our soldiers adequately.

Why are we in this debacle? I want to suggest it is just a continuation of the movie "South Pacific." Those World War II veterans remember that there was a song called "Happy Talk," happy, happy, happy talk; and that is what this administration has planned a war over was happy talk.

Look at Paul Wolfowitz, the Assistant Secretary of Defense who came to us and told us that the American taxpayers would not have to pay a dollar for this operation. Remember those predictions?

Mr. DELAHUNT. And that by this time, I say to the gentleman, there would be less than 30,000 troops in Iraq.

Mr. INSLEE. That is right. He said the Iraqi oil is going to pay for all of this. Look what he said the other day when he was asked what happened. He said, "I think there was probably too great a willingness to believe that once we got to 55 people on the black list, the rest of those killers would stop fighting."

Talk about rose-colored glasses, where people are committing suicide bombings to think that the next day, they were going to join the chamber of commerce, when we decided there was a new government in town. This was happy talk that is resulting in the deaths of our soldiers today and the incapacitation of the greatest military on Earth.

Just to give an example of how bad it is, I will tell my colleagues, if I were a soldier holding a 50-caliber on the top

of a Humvee, I would be proud of the people I serve with; but I would not be very proud of the civilian folks who have gotten me in this predicament on the streets of Baghdad.

Look at this answer from General Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, about the civilians of the intelligence community and the lack of intelligence that our soldiers have been given. He was asked recently during Senate testimony whether the Iraqi insurgency was being coordinated from a central hub, and he responded, "The intelligence community as far as I know will not give you an answer because they can't give me an answer."

So we have these young men and women posted on streets in Iraq and the civilian folks have not given them intelligence to figure out if this is even a centrally planned insurgency. This is a huge, ineffective, incapable, negligent planning of a war; and we have not even started talking about how we got into the war.

□ 2145

Mr. STRICKLAND. Those who listen to these proceedings may rightly ask the question, why are we talking about the failures of the past? Why are we not talking about what we are going to do in the future?

I think it is relevant to remind ourselves that the very people who made such blunders of judgment, who deceived the American people, who promoted this war based on false assumptions, they are the people who are still in charge. They are the people who are continuing to make the day-to-day decisions which are resulting in these terrible miscalculations and terrible blunders. And what is the result? The result is we are continuing to lose precious American lives.

Now, we had a perfunctory turnover supposedly of authority to the Iraqis, but every American knows that it is the American soldier that is continuing to be the target. It is the American soldier that is continuing to provide whatever security exists in that country, and it is the blood of the American soldier that is being shed.

I get a little tired of all of this talk about coalitions. The fact is that it is the American soldier that is bearing the burden. It is the American taxpayer that is paying the bill, and we need to end that, and it is going to continue that way until we have a change in policy.

Now, the President has got some answers to give us. I mean, the American people deserve to know are we going to have the continuation of bad judgment, bad decisions that is going to just perpetuated this thing for 1, 2, 3, 5, 10 years. We need to have some answers from the administration.

Mr. HOEFFEL. The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is absolutely right about this. And one of the important reasons that we are talking about the mistakes that were made is to make sure that it does not happen

again. We do not want history to repeat itself.

I think every member of Iraq Watch would agree that in the age of terror that we find ourselves, it may be necessary in the future to use our American force preemptively to protect America. The days of the armada, of an opposing enemy forming off our harbors or an army amassing on our borders, are probably over and we may need to quickly use preemptive force in the future. That is the Bush doctrine, preemptive use of force, but it has certain requirements that were not present this time.

First, you need accurate intelligence. You need an honest assessment of what is happening on the ground and the need for the President to level with the American people, and you have to be willing to use that force only as a last resort, not on a basis before necessary. We see in this case the President exaggerated the existence of weapons of mass destruction. He has fabricated a relationship between Hussein, al Qaeda and 9/11. He failed to exhaust diplomatic options.

What would have happened if he had allowed those international arms inspectors the extra 3 months they were requesting after their first 2 months found no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq? He failed to put together a meaningful coalition, as all of us said tonight. Ninety percent of the troops in Iraq, 90 percent of the money is American. And he has failed to commit enough troops. We have got 140,000 brave Americans in Iraq today, but it is not enough to contain this violent, deadly insurgency, and they were sent there with inadequate equipment, as my friend, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND), has been telling us for 15 months during Iraq Watch.

And what confidence do we have that this group of political leaders in the White House and the civilian leaders in the Pentagon will not do this thing again and again and again? They do not seem to understand their mistake. They will not admit their mistakes, and we have got to bring this to the attention of the American people.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) has to his immediate left what amounts to a poster, a picture on the cover of Newsweek, "How Dick Cheney Sold the War" is the overall title. And in that context I would daresay the answer to the gentleman's observations and questions are that unless there is a change in the leadership that is unlikely to occur. His questions will not be answered except in the negative. His observations will continue, because that gentleman whose picture appears there again to the left of the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) is the same gentleman whose company and associated companies are the administration, are the ones that are in charge of helping to put this infrastructure together, that is being defended by the American troops.

Yet, as a story recently in the Washington Post points out, and I read the headline to you, a story about Ariana Cha appearing July 1, "Underclass of Workers Created in Iraq, Many Foreign Laborers Receive Inferior Pay, Food and Shelter."

It may come as a shock not to members of Iraq Watch, but it may come as a shock to the American taxpayer and perhaps some of our American colleagues that what construction is taking place in Iraq is taking place under the auspices of American companies, many of whom receive single source contracts for hundreds of millions of dollars, who are not even hiring Iraqis, who may be hiring some Americans but are, in fact, bringing in wage slaves from the rest of the world and then not even paying them, cheating them at the same time. Not only are the American taxpayers being cheated by American companies but American workers and Iraqi workers are being cheated.

Mr. STRICKLAND. One of my constituents, a young West Point graduate, a gung-ho Army guy, a guy who loves the Army and who would write me these e-mails and say, I am so proud of what my soldiers are doing here in Iraq. So he is not a disgruntled Army guy. But he tells me that Halliburton is importing Filipinos and paying them very little to do work that was previously done by the American soldier. So that is an example of what the gentleman is saying.

This company, Halliburton, my goodness, when are we going to face the facts? It has been reported, by the way, in an editorial in the Columbus, Ohio Dispatch that insiders have now said that Halliburton is housing some of their employees in hotels that cost \$10,000 per night, \$10,000 per night, but that is what you can do when you have a cost plus contract. There is no incentive to hold down cost. They were paying \$100 to get a laundry bag of clothing washed, \$100 a bag; \$10,000 a night for a hotel room. And it is the American taxpayer that is paying that kind of exceedingly high cost.

We are being gouged by Halliburton, the company that Vice President DICK CHENEY was the CEO of. We all know it. The American people know it. This company is taking the American taxpayer for a ride. And I believe this administration needs to step up and say, we are going to put a stop to it.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I will elucidate a bit more on that.

In the story that I indicated I have that I was referring to, the Underclass of Workers Created in Iraq, the opening sentence is, "The war in Iraq has been a windfall for Kellogg Brown Root, Inc., the company that has a multi-million dollar contract to provide support services for U.S. troops." "KBR, a subsidiary of Halliburton Corporation," came to employ Indian workers, from India, that is to say, not Native American workers, "through 5 levels of subcontractors and employment

agents. The company, which employs 30,000 workers from 38 countries in support of the U.S. military, said it had been unaware of the workers' concerns until recently."

This is the kind of thing, Kellogg Brown, Halliburton, is always unaware of, workers problems, because they are too busy having their accountants going to work on the excessive profits they are making.

It brings to mind the work that was done by one Senator Harry Truman when, during World War II, he had his committee on a bipartisan basis looking into the question of excessive profit-making from World War II. This is not something that is invented for this time and place by members of the Democratic Party. This is something that was headed up by a Democratic Senator, who was in charge in the United States Senate, on a bipartisan basis, to see to it that profiteering does not take place at the expense of the American soldiers or the expense of the American taxpayer.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to note that the Democratic minority in this House attempted to add an enhancement of the penalties for fraud and abuse and profiteering, and yet the majority in this House and in the Senate denied that proposal.

I would like to conclude, and I will be very brief because I think we have got to go back to the initial question I think that was raised by the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE), how did we get here?

If we are to believe Richard Clark, who led the anti-terrorism effort under both Presidents Clinton and Bush until his retirement 2 years into the Bush administration, if we are to believe the highly respected, again, Republican conservative, who initiated the term of this administration as Secretary of the Treasury, Paul O'Neill, it was one week, one week after the inauguration that there was a meeting of the National Security Council and what was discussed there was the need for regime change in Iraq. Nothing about terrorism. And again, 6 weeks later, according to Paul O'Neill, there was a meeting of the National Security Council where it was discussed how the oil fields in Iraq were to be divvied up and divided among nations and corporations. That is according to Paul O'Neill and that is according to Dick Clark.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. There is an important article that was written in Harper's Magazine by David Armstrong back just before the outbreak of the war. The title of the article was "DICK CHENEY'S Song for America." In there he goes back and talks about the concept for this plan being hatched by the then-Secretary of Defense and the two Under Secretaries which at the time were Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle. The goal was to be the lone force in the Middle East. The plan that was put forward was a bold one: To go forward and overtake Baghdad.

It was rejected at the time. It was rejected by Colin Powell. It was rejected by Bush the elder. It was rejected by the most outspoken people against this war back in 2002 in this invasion and that was Jim Baker, Brent Scowcroft and Eagleburger.

So as the gentleman said at the beginning, this is not a partisan effort. This is an understanding of the wrong turn the Nation has taken with respect to foreign policy. Again, I commend the members of the Iraq Watch for their vigilance.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. I want to indicate I think we are down to our last 2 minutes. I would yield to the gentleman from Washington to close.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I want to note getting back to the war on terrorism, where is Osama bin Laden? Where is Osama bin Laden? Why is the President not talking about Osama bin Laden, who is free tonight threatening our citizens where they live in our neighborhoods?

We found out last week that this administration is spending five times more money tracking people who travel to Cuba than they are trying to interdict the money going to Osama bin Laden, who is continuing a threat to this country.

This is one example of this administration taking their eye off the ball of the guy who killed almost 3,000 Americans. We are going to continue this discussion.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Mr. Speaker, I believe we are down to our last minute or so. I do want to indicate to members of Iraq Watch that are here tonight that the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services in the previous hour indicated that he and perhaps other Members might be interested in having a dialogue with us and perhaps even combining hours, if that is acceptable under the House rules, perhaps this week or as soon as possible. And if it is okay with everybody, I wanted to pursue that, and I have indicated to the Speaker as we began the hour that that was contemplated and we will try to pursue that with the leadership.

□ 2200

Mr. Speaker, I believe we have come to essentially the end of our hour.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GINGREY). Members are reminded that it is not in order in debate to engage in personal abuse of the President.

THANKING MEMBERS INVOLVED IN IRAQ WATCH

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

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman from Georgia for the oppor-

tunity to speak for 5 minutes. Two of our esteemed colleagues are en route here, and I would like to take this 5 minutes to further thank the Members who have been involved in the Iraq Watch.

I say so from the bottom of my heart because I think at the end of the day there has been a great discussion that has been going on within this body, but unfortunately, in so many respects, it has not fully reached the American people, or it has in drips and drabs; and I commend our colleagues on the other side of the aisle who were down here in the previous hour.

I think, as the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. ABERCROMBIE) has suggested, we need to have that kind of frank discussion and debate that all too often really does not take place on this floor. It is an important dialogue that the American public needs to hear.

I believe in the final analysis it is not the shock and awe of our military and the strength that it has that determines America's greatness, but rather, the strength of our ideas and our ability to express those ideas not only here on the floor but for citizens who are out there listening, for them to partake and ultimately put in their own words, with their own voice, from their own heart and head, their feelings about these issues.

So often I go back to my district and so many of them will ask why is no one speaking out about these issues, and not understanding the workings of the House of Representatives and not understanding that so many times meetings are actually going on in committees that do not happen to make it on to C-SPAN, but also wondering where the voice and conscience of the country is, and the Iraq Watch has done an outstanding job in terms of making sure that there has been this opportunity to reach out to the American public and inform them in a nonpartisan way about these issues and raise these questions that are so important for the American people to digest, especially as we face upcoming elections that will determine the fate and course of the Nation.

If we consider that in the previous election, less than 50 percent of the American people voted and understanding that in the aftermath of September 11 there has been a great outpouring of patriotism and citizenship, and what better way to express that than by going out and voting and immersing and involving one's self in the issues of the day, it is our responsibility as Members of Congress to make sure that we inform and educate the general public; but it is equally responsible that the public have an opportunity to express their concerns.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Connecticut for yielding, and I think he is so on the mark, if you will.